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В. КАВЕРИН

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Издательство Литературы
НА ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКАХ
Москва

## V. KAVERIN

# Open Book

Foreign Languages
PUBLISHING HOUSE
Moscow

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN
BY BRIAN PEARCE

EDITED BY DAVID SKVIRSKY

DESIGNED BY N. SHISHLOVSKY

В. Каверин

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# Part One

# YOUTH

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## *Chapter I*

## FIRST PAGES

### TANYA

One, two! First, I stuck all the knives into the sand, criss-cross, and they formed a lovely trellis much like the one around the Governor's garden on Rasstannaya Street. Then I pulled them out one after another and stuck them back in again. It was more fun working like that. In fact, I liked cleaning the knives, especially when they'd begin to shine. Wiping the dishes was all right, too, provided Domna Yefimovna didn't get angry when she had to ask the landlady for a clean dish-cloth. She'd pout at the landlady, but I was the one she'd take it out on. Washing the plates was the worst job of all, because the waiters would stack the soup plates on top of the little herring dishes, and at our place they fried herring in vegetable oil. Crockery with that stuff on it was very hard to wash.

It was freezing hard out in the yard and my left hand became so frozen that I felt like banging things with it as though it were a wooden stump. Nevertheless, I cleaned the knives, down to the very last one, except that I didn't rub them over with brick dust. Almazov's tavern was in the town, but Mother and I lived in the suburb of Zamostye on the other side of the river, and when it was dark I was afraid to walk along the path leading to it. Slanting black shadows stretched across it and overhead the dry, frozen branches of the trees knocked together, making a hollow sound. Quietly, so that Domna Yefimovna shouldn't hear, I placed the sand-box under the steps and went back into the kitchen. It would be better to leave unnoticed, the more so because a few dirty plates still remained on the stove. They weren't customers' plates; the landlady herself must have brought them out while I was cleaning the knives in the yard. I carefully pushed the plates into the table drawer to be washed the next day. At that very moment, however, Domna Yefimovna came out of her little room and shouted at me: "What are you up to, you good-for-nothing!"—though she could see quite well that I had already cleaned the tub. I had to roll up my sleeves and get down to work again.

I wasn't worrying any more now about that path along the bank, because anyway it was already dark. The night policemen had come on duty and the gas lamp (the only one in the whole of the Zastennaya) which stood by the side of the tavern had been lit. What I was worrying about now was that Mother might take it into her head to come and meet me. She had not been well that morning and when we drank our tea she had groaned and complained about her heart. I hurriedly washed and dried the plates the landlady had brought in and tidied up the kitchen. Then, tying my scarf crosswise, I began to pull on the old jacket which I used to wear in those days. But Domna Yefimovna emerged again from her little room—gaunt, cross, wearing spectacles, with her hair ending in a thin grey plait like a rat's tail.

"And what about the paraffin?" she demanded. "Have you forgotten?"

Oh dear, what was I thinking about? The paraffin had been used up and the landlady had ordered me to run down to the Bobrikovs, but I had forgotten all about it. Had I lost the fifteen-kopek piece that she gave me for the paraffin, too? No, thank heaven, I still had it.

"I'll run down there at once, Domna Yefimovna," I said.

"You'll run down there! They're closed by now, most likely," she replied.

"Don't worry," I said, "I'll get in by the back way."

Now I really had to hurry! And what if Bobrikovs wouldn't serve me at the back door? The bottle was in the passage; I grabbed it and rushed headlong into the street. A big sleigh, covered with a rich bearskin rug, tore past only two paces from me.

"Get out of the way!" someone shouted.

The sleigh turned sharply round the corner, but not before I had noticed that in the driver's seat there was a fat youth wearing a light-coloured greatcoat—a *gymnasium* pupil or an officer—frantically whipping up the horse.

"Out of the way!" somebody shouted again, behind me. I didn't understand and turned round. A second sleigh was hurtling after the first one. A horse's broad chest suddenly bore down upon me, and I found myself lying in the roadway, listening to the sound of snow being crunched under sleigh-runners somewhere far away. A moment earlier I had been cold, I was holding a paraffin bottle firmly in my hands and was worrying about being late. Now I wasn't cold or worried. I was lying and gazing up at the sky. And then the sky vanished, too. . . .

* * *

When I came to, the first thing I remembered was that moment, which I had thought was my very last. I lay still without opening my eyes, and thought. I found it difficult to breathe; but whatever was happening to me was happening after that last moment. *After!* I started to breathe joyfully, noisily, and I thought several times how lucky I was that this was taking place "afterwards."

But where was I? What had happened to me? What sort of place was this small, high-ceilinged room with the dark circle on the ceiling? A chart of some kind hung on the wall, and two identical dark-red chests-of-drawers stood side by side, covered by one runner, with tassels; did this mean that I wasn't in hospital? Nor at home?

I wanted to raise myself up to look round, but at that moment I heard footsteps somewhere very near, on the other side of the wall, and something heavy began to bump against it. With my heart in my throat I listened, for a long time, to those heavy footsteps receding into the distance. I imagined a huge beast, like the mammoth which I had seen in Lyolka Almazova's *Nature Study* book, and I could almost see him going down the stairs, his flank bumping against the wall.

The footsteps ceased, and from the other side of the room, beyond the wall, I could hear the scratching of a pen and a long-drawn, indistinct muttering. I listened, stopped listening, then listened again—a pen was still scratching and scratching, somebody was still mournfully muttering on the far side of the wall....

The most important thing, though, was that I was not alone in this room.

A boy wearing a *gymnasium* uniform was fast asleep in an old leather-covered arm-chair by the head of the bed; he was lying doubled up so that his chin rested on his knee, with his palm under his cheek. He was asleep, although it was morning and the bright sunshine streamed through the window, lighting up the queer buildings with many roofs, which were depicted on the faded wallpaper.

I found breathing difficult, the bandages with splints which bound my chest hampered me. I couldn't even raise myself on my elbow. But I did manage to lift myself a little. I looked at the schoolboy a long time. His breathing made no sound. Everything was as quiet as though the house was bewitched and wrapped in this sunlit, monotonous silence, broken only by the scratching of the pen and the drowsy muttering that came from beyond the wall. Fortunately, the mammoth was no longer going down the stairs—though now I even wished a little that he would go down them once more.

Instead, it was I who was going down somewhere, very slowly, so slowly that it seemed I were trying to lessen the fright of it.

When I regained consciousness, or woke up again, I don't know which, I could tell that it was evening because the pagodas on the wallpaper (I learnt later that these buildings with many roofs are called pagodas) were reddened by the setting sun. Two voices were arguing over my head. Before opening my eyes wide I half-opened them a few times and then closed them again.

"It wasn't enough that you nearly drowned a boy of good family," a woman was saying angrily. "Now there has to be this affair, with the whole town talking about it. Remember, I'm not going to stir another finger on your behalf. You'll have to get out of this trouble by yourself. They'll expel you. . . ."

At this point I opened my eyes wide for the first time. I saw a plump lady, wearing pince-nez, who held her head proudly and was looking at somebody on the other side of me. Her hair was done in an old-fashioned, severe way, drawn up over a pad. Women had not worn their hair like that for a long time and it seemed to me that everything about her was as severe as this hair-style of hers: her skirt which touched the ground and the ribbon on her pince-nez. Even her boa (for some reason she was wearing a boa), which by its nature should have been soft, managed somehow to lie stiffly over her plump shoulders. The schoolboy whom I had seen before stood smiling by my bed.

"Mother dear, there's really nothing to get so excited about! The worst that can happen is that they'll transfer me somewhere else. And it will be for the better! I bet you I'll win a gold medal!"

"They won't transfer you. They'll expel you."

"But Rayevsky hasn't been expelled."

"Rayevsky's father is a bank manager."

"All the more reason for them not to do it. It would look bad to let him stay and expel me."

The plump lady took off her pince-nez and I saw that her near-sighted eyes were filled with tears.

"What's the use of talking," she said, waving her hand helplessly. "I never thought you would bring me so much sorrow. I'm having a hard time as it is; all I think of is how to pull you through, and you. . . ."

She wanted to go away, but the boy embraced her, or rather, gathered her up into his arms, for she barely reached his shoulder.

"Of course I'm a cad, there's no getting away from that," he said, tenderly. "But haven't I given you my word? Have you forgotten? If Tanya recovers. . . ."

I was looking at him from under my eyelids, but when he said "Tanya" I quickly closed my eyes again.

They went on arguing, but I didn't listen to them any more. I was so terrified that I would not get well that I even pressed my elbows into my sides and clutched my chest. I felt I had to do something—get up, or cry out.

"Mummy!"

The plump lady started and rushed to my side.

"Are you awake? Tanya, dear, are you awake?"

"Are you awake?" the boy asked, his voice trembling.

He ran out, and I heard the cry: "She's awake, she's awake!" echoing from room to room. First it was taken up by a high, boyish voice, then by an old man's—seemingly, the same one that I had heard muttering a moment ago from the other side of the wall. A dog began barking, doors were banged, and an old man with a big head and a beard, wearing a long coat and crumpled trousers stuffed into huge galoshes entered the room and stood by the door leaning on two sticks.

Apparently this was too much for me for I again cried "Mummy!"

Everything swam before my eyes; the little houses with many roofs floated off the walls and began to drift away in rows.

I heard the plump lady say to someone, anxiously, "Bring a towel!" and then order someone to go for my mother, calling her by her first name and patronymic, which surprised me. The terrifying old man, leaning heavily on his sticks, came up to my bed and dropped rather than sat in the arm-chair. He took me by the wrist and felt my pulse, his sad eyes gazing straight into my face. Then he waved his hand and they all went out on tiptoe.

I think he gave me something to drink, something with a rather pleasant taste, which I must drink, he said, so that my mother would come. I obeyed him, and Mother did come. As always, I was a little grieved that she had such dark, sunken eyes and such a thin, wrinkled neck.

I said to her:

"Mother, take me home."

She kissed me and said that I would soon be home, the doctor had promised it. I went off to sleep, holding her hand in mine.

## WHAT ANDREI TOLD ME

When I awoke, a boy of about thirteen, wearing a grey *gymnasium* tunic, walked unhurriedly towards me. There was something about him that made me think he was the brother of the boy I had already seen. That one had merry grey eyes; this one's eyes were grey, too, but it seemed to me that they were heavy, with an indolent expression. I realized that he must be there on duty, which meant that I was still so ill that I could not be left alone.

"Do you want anything?" he asked. "Would you like some tea?"

I shook my head.

"You haven't eaten anything all day," said the boy slowly. "Why not have some bread and butter? Please do eat something, I don't like the idea of your being hungry."

"Later on," I replied.

"All right." He pondered, then said: "Now, bear this in mind. . . ."

He looked straight at me, or rather, he examined me, and so closely that I felt uncomfortable.

"Bear in mind that it's all lies."

"What is all lies?"

"Mother saying that she's become attached to you. She told your mother. I heard her. It can't be true, if only because you've been unconscious all the time. She might as easily have become fond of a log as of you! She says it so that your mother won't make a shindy. And it's the same about the *gymnasium*."

"What do you mean?"

"When you get better," the boy went on musingly, "she's promised to send you to Madame Krzhevskaya's secondary school."

Me? To Madame Krzhevskaya's secondary school? I opened my mouth in order not to choke with joy, and quickly put my hand on my chest. I would wear a brown dress with black pinafore and carry my books in my left hand. I would learn lessons, receive marks.

"Your mother's a dressmaker, isn't she?"

"Yes."

"So you must be poor?"

I mumbled, "I don't know."

"You're probably poor if you can't even get to Madame Krzhevskaya's school. We're poor, too, though Mother for some reason doesn't like to admit it."

He was silent.

Then: "Are you interested in what goes on in the soul?"

I said that I was.

"For one whole day I didn't tell any lies at all. It might seem that that wasn't anything much. But in reality it meant a great deal, because most people tell lies all the time. For instance, you say that you don't want any tea. You lied because you wanted to be polite. You're polite and so you lie. Lies also come from pride, fear and so on. I've made a chart—you can see it, it's hanging on the wall. I'll explain it to you some time."

He went out and returned a few minutes later bringing me a glass of tea with two biscuits.

"You've had a nasty time of it," he said, putting the tea and biscuits down on the chest-of-drawers—where it was out of my reach. He sat in the arm-chair, with his legs tucked up under him. "It's a real miracle that you're still alive. You must have a strong constitution. He sat up with you for three days and nights."

"Who did?"

"Mitka. Why, he nearly died. Perhaps he was sorry for you and sorry for what he'd done. I think, though, that he wasn't so much afraid that you'd die, as that, if you did, he'd be sent to gaol or to a convict gang. Still, I'm not absolutely certain, so meanwhile you can think what you like about it."

I said nothing. I was pleased that this boy was talking to me so seriously.

"Mother is afraid of the police," said the boy, resuming his remarks. "It's odd, because she hasn't done anything. Yet whenever she sees a policeman she becomes very courteous, which normally she hardly ever is. She bribes them."

"Why?"

"They come here with complaints about Mitka, and she gives them a ruble every time. On the average she gives them five rubles a month. But, of course, his nearly killing you will cost her more than that. . . . It's been a regular benefit performance. Are you insured?"

I didn't know what "insured" meant, but anyway I said "yes."

"Then we'll have to pay your insurance company, too," he said.

The boy noticed the tea and biscuits on the chest-of-drawers, and a worried look came over his face.

"Aha, like that, is it?" he said, and with his right hand he began to twist the skin of his left. He pinched himself, twisting the skin with all his might. "Don't be surprised," he added, smiling at me, though I saw that he was in pain. "I'm breaking myself of this. Do you know what I'm talking about?"

"No."

"I'm breaking myself of absent-mindedness."

He took the tea from the chest-of-drawers and put it on the chair by my pillow.

"Drink it, please. What else shall I bring you? I suppose you can chew now?"

"Yes."

"That's fine. I'll bring you some bread and butter."

* * *

This is what I learnt from Andrei—that was the boy's name. Rayevsky had been boasting about his horses and Mitya had said that he could race him with an ordinary cab-horse. Apparently, I screamed so loudly that Mitya had the sound ringing in his ears till the following morning. He had stopped the cab, had rushed over to me and had seen that the scarf tied across my chest was all soaked in blood. Rayevsky proposed taking me to hospital, but Mitya said, "I did it and I must answer for it," and took me to Agnia Petrovna, the plump lady in the pince-nez who, as I afterwards learnt, was the mother of Andrei and Mitya.

"But possibly he meant just the opposite," Andrei observed at this point. "Perhaps he was afraid that he would be held responsible for what he'd done to you and that's why he insisted that you shouldn't be taken to hospital."

But, whatever the reason, I had been brought to this house in an almost lifeless condition. Agnia Petrovna nearly collapsed with grief. Mitya was in such despair that they had to take his revolver away from him for fear he might shoot himself.

The chief doctor of the military hospital, whom Mitya had roused at two in the morning (Mitya had pleaded with the doctor until he consented to come to attend to me), said that I must not be moved. He declared that, in any case, I would probably die, but if anybody attempted to lift me I would certainly die very quickly.

So I was put in bed, while Mitya sat by my side for three days and nights until Agnia Petrovna herself finally persuaded him to take a rest.

There were times when my condition was dangerous. Agnia Petrovna wept and said that Mitya was certain to be taken off to one of the convict labour gangs. She tried to bribe my mother in all sorts of ways—first with money, then with Madame Krzhevskaya's secondary school.

Glasha Rybakova had also come to see me, but Agnia Petrovna would not let her in.

"And who's Glasha Rybakova?"

"Oh, of course, you don't know her," said Andrei. "She's the girl Rayevsky and Mitya are in love with."

Glasha was a *gymnasium* pupil, in the eighth form. She was beautiful, but Agnia Petrovna did not want Mitya to marry her; first of all, because her parents were shady people in some way, and secondly, because her brother had "read himself silly" and been sent to a lunatic asylum. Read himself silly—that meant that he had read more books than his brain could digest. But Agnia Petrovna asserted that this was only a pretext and that in reality all the Rybakovs were queer in the head. She often argued with Mitya about it.

This was very interesting, even though I didn't understand all of it. It was the beautiful girl who stirred my imagination. As though she were before me, I saw her with loose-flowing fair hair, wearing an evening dress and a white satin bodice. I had seen beautiful girls like that on New Year picture postcards.

What had happened after I had fallen under the horse? Nothing out of the ordinary. The district police inspector had sent for Agnia Petrovna, and if he had not hired the very best of grand pianos, for which he paid nothing at all for a whole year, Mitya would have been exiled to a country district. What the grand piano had to do with the case wasn't very clear. But Andrei didn't explain, and I just wondered, without asking him.

## DEPOT FOR THE HIRE OF GRAND AND UPRIGHT PIANOS

"Depot for the Hire of Grand and Upright Pianos"—that was the name of the house where I was lying in bed and getting better, although the doctor had declared that I was certain to die. I had known already that there was such a depot in our town. Its sign was the first that I had been able to read unaided and all my life I have remembered the large white letters with the funny little tails, on a bright green ground. True, I had imagined that in this depot, just as in the fire station, there must be, instead of stairs, a hole with a pillar through it, by means of which men could descend to the ground floor in the twinkling of an eye whenever an alarm was sounded. Although there was no such hole here, it was not at all an ordinary house and it has remained for ever in my mind a "depot"—that is to say, a place where everything happens unexpectedly and nothing can be foreseen. The mammoths ascending and descending the stairs were actually porters carrying heavy pianos up and down.

As a matter of fact, this scene became one of my childhood memories: shouts on the stairs: "Heave! Turn!" and a grand piano floating helplessly in the air, like some animal whose legs had just been cut off.

I stayed six weeks with the Lvovs. But everything that I saw and heard in the "depot" was so new to me that even now these six weeks seem a very long and very interesting period of my life, a period which stands out from everything that happened afterwards.

Naturally, I have remembered only the most important things, that is, the things that struck me most when the doctor allowed me to get up. I walked round the entire flat and in every room found one object which was the most important for me, while everything else seemed (and seems to this day) just a background for it.

The most important object in Andrei's room, where I had been lying in bed, separated from the dining-room by two chests-of-drawers and a faded carpet, was the "chart of lies" on which he recorded every evening how many lies he had told and for what reasons.

Across the middle of the chart ran a blue zigzag line—Andrei explained to me that this was a "graph." With the aid of this "graph" he worked out the intensity of lies and the extent to which they were dependent on the various circumstances of life. The chart hung above a badly-scratched table on which lay piles of exercise-books; they did not belong to Andrei but to Mitya and other senior boys studying at the same Lopakhin *gymnasium*. These exercise-books also attracted my attention. You could find anything you wanted in them—difficult problems in algebra and geometry, with solutions, Latin exercises, and essays in Russian on any topic whatsoever. Not only Andrei but the whole of Form 4B cribbed from these exercise-books. This proceeding was known as "consulting Schneiderman." Schneiderman was the elder brother of one of Mitya's friends and had been a schoolboy long ago, ten years before. He used to get everything right and nothing in his homework was marked less than "4 plus."*

In the dining-room the most important thing for me was a portrait of a fair-haired young man with a beard and moustache, wearing such a high, stiff collar that it was clear at once why he looked so embarrassed and half-choked. Andrei said that this was "a caricature of Father," meaning that the artist had purposely depicted his father in a ludicrous way, so that his friends and acquaintances should make fun of him. The father of Andrei and Mitya had been a well-known barrister, whom the Black Hundreds had murdered by hurling a stone at him when he was coming away from the court-house in Kiev in an open cab. After that had happened, Agnia Petrovna and her children left Kiev and she went to work for Julius-Heinrich Zimmermann, a manufacturer who had opened one of his "depots" in Lopakhin. The house where the "depot" was belonged to Zimmermann and Agnia Petrovna paid him rent for her flat.

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* The highest mark in Russian schools is 5.

In Mitya's room the most important object was a sealed glass tube which Andrei said contained curare poison. One drop of this, he said, was sufficient to kill 176 people; and though the 177th wouldn't die he would be a sick man for the rest of his life. Here he added that this was probably a lie and that Mitya lied "from a desire to pose." I did not know what "a desire to pose" meant and I concluded that Mitya simply wanted somebody to draw a picture of him. Thus, the hidden connection between the curare poison and this harmless desire of Mitya's was long a mystery to me.

Besides the curare, on Mitya's table there lay an ashtray made from a skull and a carving of an old man's head, painted red, with a pointed beard and fly-away eyebrows.

Andrei said that this was the demon Mephistopheles and that he appeared in the famous opera *Faust*. On Mephistopheles' bald head, on his beard, and even on his nose were many inscriptions—some of them very strange, so that they remained in my memory for ever afterwards. On his nose was written: "Genius or madness!" I asked Andrei what genius meant and he replied that a genius was somebody like Schneiderman.

Finally, the room which was next to mine but which could be entered only by passing through all the others, was occupied by Agnia Petrovna's brother, who was known as Uncle Pavel in the family. It was he who had frightened me so much when I first woke up. He was an invalid and very old, nearly twenty-five years older than Agnia Petrovna. He was the one who was always scratching away with his pen and muttering to himself on the other side of the wall. But when I took a close look at him he didn't seem the least bit frightening. He walked about the house bent double, tapping with his two sticks.

Uncle Pavel was a doctor but he had hardly practised at all for a long time. Instead, he wrote, and it was enough to peep into his room to be convinced that he did this wonderfully well. The entire room was stacked with papers, all written on in a clear, small hand, every letter distinct. Under the table, on the window-sills, on top of the cupboard, everywhere lay periodicals with stubs of paper sticking out of them. Andrei told me that he was writing a "work."

Everything in Pavel Petrovich's room was the worse for wear and old-fashioned: the moquette-covered arm-chair with its extending foot-rest, the little smoker's table, the faded crimson cloth draped over the bed, the watch-case covered with little blue shells, and the numerous photographs in which one and the same beautiful lady appeared again and again—now in a velvet dress with a long train, now in helmet and armour, now in Russian national costume. There was also a photograph of the doctor himself, taken when he was still quite young; he had a beard and a moustache, carried a top hat in his hand and wore a white waistcoat.

There were two windows in the room, with wide window-sills. On one of these stood an instrument which Andrei told me was a microscope; this was like a telescope, only a telescope magnified things a hundredfold, while a microscope magnified them a thousandfold. On the other window-sill there were a lot of glass tubes, corked with cotton wool and sealed at the one end, while something mouldy—a small piece of cheese, or some orange peel—was always lying in an old, cracked glass. The room, like Pavel Petrovich, always smelt slightly of mildew.

A harmonium, decrepit like everything else in this room, stood in one corner. Sometimes the doctor played on it and then the harmonium would begin to wheeze and sigh as though it were a living creature which needed to have air in order to say how sad it was.

Mother came to see me every day, dressed as smartly as she could manage, in her Kashmir shawl, which she wore only on holidays or when she went to sew at the Batovs, a rich merchant family who lived in Lopakhin.

When Agnia Petrovna came in Mother would begin to talk about the strikes at the tannery or about there being famine in Germany, too, so that in consequence they had forbidden the starching of linen and Wilhelm II had personally ordered that no potatoes be peeled raw but only after cooking. I didn't like this. Altogether, something had changed in my mother during the days when I was lying at the Lvovs' place. It seemed that she had been deeply upset by something, and not only by what had happened to me.

There were moments when I vaguely felt that Mother had become different and that she wasn't happy about something. I pondered on this, and then forgot it.

I had no time—I just don't remember ever being so busy! Andrei gave me a book—*Manners for All Occasions*. I read it every day, and every day I learnt things such as no girl in our yard or even in our tenements could have dreamt of.

Soup, it turned out, had to be eaten without any noise at all, and the spoon placed in the mouth not sideways but endways. Not only should gravy not be licked up with the tongue, as I always did, but it was unseemly even to wipe it up from the plate with bread. Until a girl was married she ought, as far as possible, to avoid leaving her house alone or with her first cousin. One shouldn't say, "Eh?" but: "Pardon me, cousin, I did not understand what you said?" or: "What did you say, Grandfather?" Everything in a girl's bedroom ought to be "simple and elegant." One should answer one's parents—this was very interesting—as politely as one answered strangers. It was out of the question to blow on your soup, but it was permissible to move one's spoon quietly to and fro in order to cool it.

But what impressed me most of all was that on all occasions a girl must be "kind without weakness, just without severity, helpful without servility, witty without sarcasm, gracefully modest and proudly serene."

I imagined myself living in accordance with *Manners for All Occasions.* My husband, in a starched collar, was sitting reading a newspaper. The children, too, were sitting still and quiet because, apparently, children must not utter a word at table except *merci.* Nobody was sniffing or yawning or eating noisily or blowing on the soup. Suddenly a telegram arrives; it is bad news—we are ruined. I read it, and remain gracefully modest and proudly serene.

Yes, it was an interesting book, though for a long time it poisoned life for me. For nearly six months I couldn't move hand or foot without first recalling what *Manners for All Occasions* advised in the circumstances.

But, of course, it was not only this book that made me forget my previous life completely for a while.

My previous life! That meant Almazov's tavern, where I was once made to stay half a day on my knees because of a speck of dirt on a table-knife. It meant coming home late, which at first was very frightening and miserable, but later became a matter of habit, though still frightening, especially when I reached Olginsky Bridge and saw our poor tenements spread out between the river and the fields, stretching away into the distance before me. I walked down the steep, ice-covered stairway to the riverside, and the bare, black poplars, which I disliked, greeted me with the hollow knocking of their branches.

My previous life. That meant our room in a house belonging to "Valuyev, Life-Freeman of this City" (as was written on the board at the gate). It was a wooden two-storey house with such thin partition walls that Mother and I got into the habit of whispering, though we had nothing to hide from our neighbours. Although I was only a little girl at the time, yet already I was burdened with a knowledge of everything that happened every hour in that house....

It wasn't much of a life, that previous life of mine!

Anyway, it had come to an abrupt end and I did not regret it in the least. On the contrary. I thought with a sick feeling about what must happen in two or three weeks, when all this—Almazov's tavern, the poplars, Mother's whispering and her weeping in the night which I didn't understand—would all begin again, and when everything that I had seen and learnt at the "depot" would be left behind for ever. Most of all I regretted that my wonderful conversations with Andrei would cease.

He used to look in to see me every day after school; I had already come to expect him, though, of course, I didn't show it and when he came in always remained "proudly serene." He would drop his books, which were tied together with a strap, on the floor, sit down in the leather armchair, get his breath, and at once start to talk. The first time I got a proper look at him I saw a fairly thickset boy with broad shoulders and a broad chest. Yet the first impression which I'd formed—of slowness, of absorbed attention and preoccupation with things which held no interest for other people—was maintained and even became stronger.

At the time when I was recovering and already getting up for short spells, Andrei was mainly concerned with Mitya's affairs.

"I think Mitya isn't at all afraid that they'll expel him," he said to me one day, "because he's sure that the revolution will come soon, and after the revolution there may be quite different laws. In their form they've got a monarchist...."

I didn't know what a monarchist was. In a situation like this it was laid down that one should "remain courteously silent." I said nothing.

"The rest are made up of S.R.s, S.D.s, and three

Cadets,"* Andrei went on. "The monarchist is a chap named Katyk. (Do you know 'Katyk's Cigarette-Papers'?) But that's a lie, too. It's just that he wants to be different from the others, somehow."

I wanted to ask why Katyk needed to make himself different from the others in some way, but I kept quiet for fear I should put my foot in it. However, there was something which interested me far more than this and, striving to give my face a "gracefully modest" expression, I asked Andrei if he thought Mitya would marry Glashenka Rybakova?

Andrei considered. "He'll marry her," he said. "But it won't mean much to him. Mother says it's his first love, but I know it's not, because Mitya has several times already intended to get married."

As to first love, I had read in *Manners for All Occasions* that it "does not wish to be observed by a stranger's eye," etc. But obviously, this had no bearing on our conversation, if only because one couldn't say of Mitya's first love, which the whole town was talking about, that it "did not wish to be observed by a stranger's eye."

"It won't be easy for him to get married, anyway," Andrei continued, after a pause. "He has his own crowd, you know."

"What crowd?"

"Zernov, Kovalevsky, Lazarev, Kolyshkin from A, and Rubin. This crowd are trying to persuade him not to get married, especially Rubin. But if Mitya makes up his mind—there's nothing for it! They'll kidnap her."

"Whom will they kidnap?"

"Glashenka. They'll carry her off in *troikas* to Petrov, and then it'll be like looking for the wind in the fields."

Petrov was a neighbouring small town.

"They're all for one and one for all. You know, the motto on their leaving counters is: 'Happiness comes from life, and life from work.' By the way, I almost agree with that motto. Except that to say that happiness comes from life is stupid. Unhappiness also comes from life. But this is their way of deducing that happiness comes from work. That may well be true. What do you think?"

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* I.e., Socialist-Revolutionaries, Social-Democrats, Constitutional Democrats.

I said that it depended on the kind of work.

Mitya himself I hardly ever saw. From the time when I came to and the chief doctor from the military hospital announced that, strange as it might seem, I was evidently recovering, Mitya had vanished and completely ceased to take an interest in my fate. Only once, glancing into my room, he had asked in a brisk, indifferent voice, "Well, how are things, Tatyana? You look fine," though I couldn't have been looking fine because that day I'd eaten too many beans and was as white as paper.

Andrei said that that was typical of his brother.

"As things are now, you belong to the past," he explained, "and for people of Mitya's type the past generally doesn't matter very much."

* * *

Mother told me that within a few days she would take me home; and how short those few days seemed to me in comparison with the long, monotonous years I must spend in Zamostye suburb! Agnia Petrovna gave me a book—the works of Pushkin. She gave my mother her old evening dress of tulle-covered damask silk with sequins sewn on it. Already now we were being summoned to table and were eating our dinner. Nobody called it a farewell dinner, but it was one all the same, because I was invited to table for the first time. Incidentally, at this dinner I amazed the entire household by my politeness, never once saying, "What?" but, instead, "What did you say, Agnia Petrovna?" or "Excuse me, Grandfather, I didn't understand what you said." True, I did blow on the soup, but at once remembered and started to move the spoon to and fro to cool it.

Andrei asked me indifferently, "You're leaving us, then?"

But he lied, because he wasn't at all indifferent to my going away.

Already I was imagining how I would say good-bye to the pagodas on the wallpaper, to the leather arm-chair, to the circle which the oil-lamp had made on the ceiling and at which I always gazed when falling asleep. It would be the last time that I would listen to the sound of the crockery which came to me from the dining-room, to the sighing of the old harmonium, and to the voices of Mitya's friends arguing every evening about Rubin's elder brother, a "political" who had been arrested the previous year. I had even packed, that is to say had wrapped up in my handkerchief the two books, some embroidery which I had done and an "Elephant"-brand india-rubber which Andrei had given me. And suddenly they forgot about me! The whole household, beginning with Agnia Petrovna and ending with Agasha, found themselves so busy that they forgot all about me, and I remained at the Lvovs' for a few days more.

## THE OLD DOCTOR

In Andrei's room there was a loft, that is, a big shelf under the ceiling, for storing things. Every now and again Andrei would bring a step-ladder and fetch down from this loft some copies of *Niva*, an illustrated weekly magazine published in St. Petersburg from 1869 onwards. Andrei had resolved to read *Niva* right through from the first number and when I was at the Lvovs he had already reached 1904.

This time, however, it was Agasha who appeared with the step-ladder. Puffing and panting she climbed up to the loft so that only her thick bare heels remained visible, and then she lowered herself down carrying a big trunk.

"We are going to Petrograd," she said, and went out.

I wasn't very surprised to hear this because I knew from Andrei that Agnia Petrovna sometimes went to Petrograd. Julius-Heinrich Zimmermann, the owner of the Lopakhin "depot," lived there. His name was inscribed in German on some of the pianos. Besides, Agnia Petrovna also went to Petrograd to get actors to come to our town. She undertook to arrange concerts for them; and, according to Andrei, she had considerable talent for this work.

She was getting ready to go to Petrograd for some actors—that was how I interpreted Agasha's words.

But I was wrong! Agasha came back, again went up to the loft, this time to fetch some straps, and when she came down she said that Agnia Petrovna was going to see a Minister.

"We'll go to the Count-Minister," she said cryptically. "And then—as God wills. We won't leave things as they are."

I had made friends with Agasha during the month that I was at the Lvovs'. She was stout, timid, and loved to make a mystery of things.

"To the Count or to the Minister?" I asked Agasha.

"To the Count-Minister," she replied sternly. "We shall complain."

And she left me again, shaking the straps at somebody. This was interesting, though the mysterious Count-Minister existed, of course, only in Agasha's imagination. I poked my nose into her kitchen, but she drove me out. A little hurt, I took to my book. Then somebody knocked on the front door, Agasha opened it, and a man's voice asked whether Mitya was at home. Mitya was out.

Agnia Petrovna came along the corridor, her dress rustling, and I heard her tell Agasha to call her if anybody came for Mitya and then hurriedly return to her room and lock herself in. There was something alarming in those rapid footsteps, the slamming of the door and the clicking of the lock, even in the sound made by her heavy clothes. This time Mitya must really have "given a benefit performance" if it was necessary to intercede for him in Petrograd.

I heard the old doctor sigh on the other side of the wall and suddenly I decided to go and see him—perhaps he would tell me what was happening?

I tiptoed through all the rooms and, coming to his, peeped in—the door was ajar.

"Hullo, Uncle Pavel."

He nodded and went on writing. Formerly he had been writing without any haste, adding one rounded letter to another, but now I noticed that he was writing very quickly, illegibly; he even made a few blots, to which he paid no attention.

"Have you been out for a walk today, Uncle Pavel?" I said, politely. "There's seven degrees of frost, but it's a lovely day."

The old man raised his left hand and waved it, evidently for me to be quiet. I was about to go away but he waved again, evidently for me to stay. I stayed. He wrote silently, his lips pressed firmly together. The pen broke; he muttered a forcible "Damn!" and picked up another one.

This went on for a long time—so long that it began to seem to me that life had always been like this, with the old doctor for ever sitting and writing and myself always looking in the mirror over the wash-stand and making faces in it. Now that I had got thin and pale in consequence of my illness, I was able to pull some remarkable faces, with those cheek-bones of mine, my big eyes and my plaits which stuck out in different directions over my ears. Then I examined the doctor, with his bent back. What was he writing? What was he thinking about at that moment? Why didn't he want me to go away? How strange that I should be thinking of one thing and he of something else! I had come to ask about Mitya, what was happening and why Agnia Petrovna was going to Petrograd. But he wasn't thinking about that. He was writing a "work" and it didn't matter to him what Agnia Petrovna was up to, or my mother, or Agasha, or Mitya. I don't know how to convey this feeling, but it was then that for the first time I consciously evaluated the trend of another person's thinking, which forges ahead, paying no attention to the thousands of other little thoughts which surround it on all sides.

The doctor stopped writing at last. He took off his glasses and I saw his round, melancholy eyes, with a rim round the iris such as one sees in very old people.

"Now then, listen to this," he said.

He said "listen to this" as though he were addressing the whole world and not just one little thin girl with plaits who didn't understand a single word that he uttered. At first the little girl listened attentively, but after a while she grew tired and began to frown at herself in the mirror again, trying hard not to make an ugly face. Then she sat up straight, recalling that one should not allow one's back to touch the back of the chair. . . .

The doctor, however, went on reading. His eyes shone, red patches appeared on his cheeks where his beard thinned out into the soft, pleasant down under his eyes. He was arguing some point and once, getting angry, he even struck the table with his fist.

At another place in his reading he threw back his head and gazed at me with child-like triumph from under his glasses. Smiling, he slowly repeated some phrase or other twice. He narrowed his eyes shrewdly, gnawed at his beard, arched his eyebrows and was silent, as though expecting me to raise an objection.

Many years later I came upon this page in his manuscript. I recognized it by the blots, and especially because one of the blots was shaped like a cat. This is what the old doctor had written about the tasks of science:

"To endeavour to explain real but apparently astonishing facts as consequences of other facts already long familiar; to dispose of their strangeness; to eliminate their quality of miraculousness. To make mankind acquainted with new and really marvellous phenomena, compared with which wonders of the imagination will pale into insignificance...."

* * *

He stopped speaking and, completely forgetting me, began altering one of his phrases. I sat there for only a little while longer and then ran off to my room, because somebody had again asked for Mitya, and Agnia Petrovna was talking with the caller in the hall, and from my room I could hear everything that went on.

It was Rubin, one of Mitya's friends, a small, unusually dark young man who could open one eye very wide while closing the other, without showing even the slightest wrinkle. This was very funny. Andrei said that Rubin was the most placid person in the world and that he had only once lost his poise: that was when his elder brother, a student, was taken to prison. The elder Rubin was a Bolshevik, but I could find out hardly anything about that party from Andrei.

"Fine news, I must say," Agnia Petrovna was repeating for the tenth time. "Only that was needed, as the last straw!"

"Agnia Petrovna, in my opinion, this is all the doing of that scoundrel 'Whiskers.' "

"Whiskers" was the Latin master's nickname.

"What's 'Whiskers' got to do with it? Where is Mitya?"

"I don't know, I give you my word. Logically, he should be at home. In so far, however, as he is under the influence of a certain illogical feeling, he may at this moment not be at home."

"Is he at Glashenka's then?" Agnia Petrovna demanded, testily.

"Possibly."

"Then go to him and tell him that if he doesn't come this very minute...."

And she repeated what she always said: that she would take no steps, she would not lift a finger, and so forth.

Rubin left and the hall became silent. I opened the door a little without making any noise. I could not see the whole of Agnia Petrovna through the crack, but merely from her cheek and from her hand, with its beringed fingers, which she was holding to her temples, it was possible to perceive that she was very much upset and could not make up her mind what to do. I wanted to tell her that everything would come out all right but, at that moment, somebody knocked on the door again. Agnia Petrovna opened it and in came Mitya, his greatcoat unbuttoned, smiling but preoccupied.

"Ah, so it's you?" said Agnia Petrovna in a strange voice. "Well, now what?"

He stopped smiling and his face became tense and dark, with a fixed look.

"Come to my room and we'll have a talk," Agnia Petrovna said imperatively. "I'm leaving today."

And they went away. This was now not merely interesting, but mysterious as well, and I couldn't settle down to anything while I waited for Andrei to come home from school and tell me what it was all about.

He came at last. I saw him through the clear space which I had made with my finger on the frost-covered glass. His nose and mouth were smeared with something red, but I didn't realize what it was—he was walking along so unhurriedly and purposefully. It was only when he squatted down and began to apply snow to his face that I understood that it was blood, because the snow at once turned red.

I don't know what it was that held me back. I nearly ran out of the house to his side. Perhaps it was because he looked round at that moment; probably he didn't want anybody to see him sitting in the porch and applying snow to his battered nose.

Finally, he knocked on the door. Agasha opened it and, turning his face away from her, he quickly went to his room. I rushed after him and knocked on the door, calling his name. But I was not fated to go in!

"Who's there?"

"Me, Tanya."

"Come back in an hour," said Andrei. "Or rather, I'll tell you what—come back tomorrow."

## A RIDDLE

A sleigh stood at the door, the rime-covered horse looking like a shaggy yak between shafts. Although my little cleared space on the glass had become painted over with frost again I could nevertheless recognize the plump figure descending from the porch as Agnia Petrovna and the slim, tall one as Mitya, whom she was ordering back indoors because he had rushed out without his greatcoat. The driver turned round and unfastened the rug, Mitya gave him the trunk, and Agnia Petrovna took her seat, squaring her shoulders and holding herself very straight, as though she were tied to an invisible rod. The sleigh started off, and everything in the porch became as it had been five minutes before: quiet reigned and snow-flakes fell, visible only when they passed through a ray of light.

In *Manners for All Occasions* there was not a single word about how one ought to behave if a boy was punched on the nose and then said rudely to a girl he knew, "Come back tomorrow."

However, it gave an interesting piece of advice: "In an embarrassing situation, put yourself in the place of the people around you." I duly did that and came to the conclusion that, if somebody had punched my nose, I, too, would not leave my room, not for a day or two but perhaps for a whole week. Accordingly, the next day, after waiting, for decency's sake, until Andrei had washed and had his breakfast—it was Sunday and he got up very late, at ten o'clock—I went to him and greeted him as though nothing had happened.

"Good morning!"

He raised his eyes from his book and also said, "Good morning."

We fell silent. Then I asked what he was reading.

"Nat Pinkerton, *The Doom of the Victoria Mines.*"

"Is it interesting?"

"Very."

We again fell silent. His nose was pretty swollen and I did not know which would be more polite—to ask how it was or to behave as though I had noticed nothing. Andrei himself solved the problem, however, and, as always, very simply.

"I can see that you want to ask me why my nose is swollen," he said gravely.

I replied, stupidly, "Yes."

"Valka Korzhich broke it for me."

"Oh?"

I knew Korzhich slightly. He was a fair, good-looking boy, who, Andrei said, was good company because he had a strong will. He used to come to crib algebra "from Schneiderman."

"It was on account of Mitya," Andrei went on. "Did you know that he's been expelled and put on the black list?"

And he explained that Mitya would now not be allowed to go to any State educational institution but only to a private one, and that a big bribe would have to be paid because it would be recorded in his certificate of attendance up to the seventh form that he had been expelled and blacklisted. His mother had gone to Petrograd.

"What for? To plead for him?"

Andrei nodded.

"To get him taken off the black list?"

"Yes."

We were silent again. I wanted to ask what Korzhich had to do with all this and why he had broken Andrei's nose. But I felt that it wouldn't do to hurry things.

"Altogether they were wrong in expelling and blacklisting him. I speak not as his brother but as a disinterested observer. The Head himself said that Mitya is talented but that you can't succeed with talent alone. Well, I think you can. Take Julius Caesar, for example; in his boyhood he was a hooligan, but he succeeded because he had talent."

I said, "Undoubtedly."

He stopped speaking and glumly felt his nose, which probably was still hurting him.

"The main thing, though, you understand, is that they look on Mitya as unreliable. For instance, everybody knows that he was friends with the elder Rubin, who was put away last year. Then 'Whiskers' found a banned book in his desk. In short—there's a political background to this business."

And Andrei went on to tell me that there was bound to be a revolution soon and, therefore, people instantly judged whatever happened from the viewpoint of whether it was "for" the revolution or "against" it. Mitya wrote an essay on the causes of the fall of the Roman Empire, and everybody realized that by the Roman Empire he meant ours—so that he was "for." The Head had summoned Agnia Petrovna to his study and cast up this essay of Mitya's against her—he was "against." The workers were on strike at the tannery and the eighth form had taken a collection for them—that was "for." The police inspector had ordered the arrest of "all persons guilty of carrying on agitation in food queues"—that was "against." Mitya had been expelled for political unreliability—that also, of course, was "against."

The "Rights" had won the day at the meeting of the School Council and that was why Mitya was being punished so mercilessly. The "Lefts" were in the minority. True, Rayevsky had been expelled, too, but he didn't care as he would go to Petrograd and enter the Law School, which was a step higher than the *gymnasium*.

All this was exceedingly complicated, but I followed the general gist of it. Andrei had related it, however, with an expression as though this conflict was connected with the injury to his nose; but what the connection was I still didn't understand. I listened a little longer and then asked:

"But what about Korzhich?"

"Oh, yes!" said Andrei, and pinched his left hand sharply. "I quite forgot. We had a quarrel about his elder brother."

"About his elder brother?"

"Yes. He has an elder brother who is 'against' Mitya, too, because Mitya nearly drowned him last summer. I said that this wasn't fair, and we fought. But afterwards I was sorry that we'd quarrelled because Valka is a 'Left,' after all. His brother's a 'Right,' though. Do you know how they tease him? 'Mimi with your face like a pup, why do you go about so stuck up?' Altogether, it's a pity Mother's gone," said Andrei, unexpectedly. "When she leaves, things always finish up rather worse than they were before."

* * *

In fact, everything changed at the "depot" the very day after Agnia Petrovna's departure. Visitors came to see Agasha in the morning—amongst others, a gendarme and his wife (I'll have more to say about him later). There wasn't any vodka but the gendarme brought some other spirit. He said that in Petrograd they were short of salt, sugar, meat, flour, firewood, and kerosene.

The old doctor forgot whether he had had his lunch or not and was very surprised when I told him that he hadn't. But all this was as nothing compared with the parcels which Mitya's friends Zernov and Rubin brought for him.

The first to bring a parcel was Vanya Zernov. Andrei had told me that he was fantastically rich because his father owned a "butcher's, poulterer's and greengrocer's." He laughed and stamped about for a long time in Mitya's room, and then he tumbled out of the doorway, clutching his stomach, just at the very moment when I, quite by accident, happened to pass by. The door was quickly slammed, but not before I had glimpsed Mitya standing in front of a mirror wearing a strange get-up; he had on a pair of short trousers from which his long legs stuck out, and a jacket which he had put on wearing nothing else underneath it.

Then came Rubin, also bearing a parcel. While removing his coat he placed it on a chair. I had to look for my galoshes in the hall and quite accidentally I brushed against this parcel. It fell softly to the ground and came open. "Oh, I'm sorry!" I exclaimed politely, and bent down to pick the parcel up.

It, too, contained a coat, and also something white, a shirt-front or a shirt, the whole smelling strongly of mothballs. Rubin pushed me away and picked the parcel up himself. On the threshold he turned round and closed one eye without wrinkling the skin, while the other eye looked at me—suspiciously, I thought.

This was a riddle! Fresh bursts of laughter came from Mitya's room—hearty laughter, in floods. It was Rubin laughing.

Some twenty minutes later, he came out carrying a bundle.

I heard him swearing at "the old woman who gets such idiotic ideas." Mitya made no objection but only asked in a despairing way, "What can I do about it?"

I came out in a sweat, so intensely did I puzzle myself about the meaning of all this. Of course, I could ask Andrei, but I desperately wanted to find out for myself.

Perhaps there was to be a ball at Nobles' Club? But there was never more than one ball a year in Lopakhin and this one and only ball had taken place quite recently.

Perhaps Mitya intended to go and call on the Head at his home and give it to him on the snout? He loathed the Head, and I myself had heard him shout to Agnia Petrovna that he would refuse to shake hands with him at the leaving ceremony. Yes, that was probably what would happen! I had never seen the Head but I imagined him a stout man with a red face, somewhat like the policeman at our tenements. This stout man would ask, "What can I do for you?" And Mitya, very pale, with sombre, intent gaze, would go up to him and, from his great height, would smite him.

The thought of this worried me so much that I couldn't bear it and I ran off to see Andrei.

He had already finished *The Doom of the Victoria Mines* and was now reading a thick book called *A New Method of Medical Treatment.*

"So the trousers were short, were they?" he asked, when I told him my puzzling story.

"Yes."

He pondered. "Just a little below the knees?"

I was astonished.

"How did you know?"

"I made a deduction," said Andrei. "Now, where could Zernov have got a civilian suit from? He pinched it from his father. And his father's a little man, not much more than five feet tall. However, this is something which has become possible only since Mother went away. Yesterday Mother was at home and nobody was carrying suits about. Consequently, this must be preparation for something that he couldn't do while Mother was here."

I agreed.

"Now, let's think. Why might Mitya want a civilian suit? Perhaps now that he's been expelled from the *gymnasium* he's decided to perform?"

"What do you mean, to perform?"

"Didn't you know he was learning to play the violin for seven years? But he chucked it up after Mother took him to Petrograd and the famous violinist Kubelik said that he didn't have an ear for music."

Andrei proceeded to prove that this was quite possible. By this means Mitya could kill two birds with one stone —show his contempt for the "Rights" and earn a lot of money. Incidentally, the "depot" had been making hardly any money of late; Julius-Heinrich Zimmermann had already threatened to dismiss Agnia Petrovna and if that happened all that would be left for her would be to become a music teacher at Madame Krzhevskaya's secondary school.

Accordingly, we decided that Mitya was going to "perform." I was a little disappointed about it, but Andrei wasn't troubled at all. It soon became clear, though, that we meant different things by this same word "perform." He was thinking that Mitya would be giving concerts, like Mozzhukhin or Shalyapin, at the Nobles' Club. I, however, thought of Mitya going into courtyards and playing on his violin and then taking his cap round; caretakers would chase him away, while people threw down five-kopek pieces wrapped in paper from their open windows. Inasmuch as Kubelik had found that he had no ear this seemed to me to be his most probable future.

## A TRYST

It all became clear to me after this conversation. Mitya was preparing for a concert. And when I heard him playing the violin, for the first time since I'd been at the Lvovs, I was completely reassured and went out for a stroll in the yard.

This was the second or third time that I'd been out since my recuperation. Wrapped up in three scarves like an old grandmother, with, in addition, a big country shawl which Agasha had thrown over them, I stopped a little while on the back porch and then quietly walked round the house.

When I went out into the yard for the first time after my illness,. and saw the thick snow which crunched underfoot, and the high, cold wintry sky, I felt depressed and at once returned indoors. Now I was used to it and wandered about enjoying myself, all the more because the Lvovs' yard was an interesting one. Crates for the pianos stood there; one could hide amongst them, play at "Cossacks and robbers" or pretend that the crates were a town. The *gymnasium* pupils, when they came out for their long break, spent it in these crates, playing cards so as not to waste their time.

That day the yard was empty. After wandering among the crates, I had made up my mind to go back indoors when a girl in a short, white sheepskin coat appeared on the other side of the wicket-gate and then immediately disappeared from my view. The coat was a pretty one, trimmed with fur at the sleeves and hem, and the girl was pretty, too; of this I was convinced when, after standing for a little while in the lane, she pushed open the wicket-gate and hesitantly entered the yard. She was delicately pink, with large eyes, and somehow fragile; I felt this when, speaking to me, she took off one of her mittens and rearranged her hair, which had strayed from under her little fur cap—it resembled a Caucasian fur cap.

"Do you live here?"

"Yes."

"What's your name?"

"Tanya."

This was when she took off her mitten and arranged her hair. She looked worried. Suddenly she put her arms around me.

"Tanya! So you are Tanya? Are you better? Are you taking a walk?"

Politely I replied:

"Thank you. It was nothing. I'm much better."

"I'm so glad!"

We were standing in the middle of the yard and I could tell that she was afraid of something. Besides, she seemed to be ashamed that there was something to be afraid of. I was excited, too, for I had realized long since that this was Glashenka Rybakova. She was not a beautiful woman with loose-flowing hair, wearing a white satin bodice, but she was beautiful nevertheless and I had fallen in love with her at first sight.

I said, "Perhaps we might go behind the crates? It's rather windy here."

She smiled and her face became still more delicate. She had white, astonishingly even teeth and on her upper lip there was a bloom which was especially noticeable because it was white with frost. There was something sombre in her eyes, though; I noticed it when she smiled.

"No, I've only got a moment. I wanted. . . ." She again removed a mitten, this time from her left hand, and pulled a note from it. The note fell out and she gave it to me.

"You couldn't... Is Mitya at home?"

"Yes, he's at home."

"You couldn't give him this note?"

I replied politely, "This very minute. Wait a moment, please."

And, without hurrying, I went back into the house.

All my life I've remembered that feeling of expecting something extraordinary to happen with which I went to Mitya, firmly clutching the note in my hand. On my honour, I shouldn't have been surprised if the doors of the house had burst open of their own accord at that moment!

Mitya was still playing his violin, ignorant of what awaited him. Without ceasing to play he turned and raised his eyebrows with displeasure when I entered. I handed over the note carefully, as though it were something alive.

From that instant the feeling of expecting a miracle to happen was joined by another feeling which didn't leave me that day or for many days thereafter, when I had already been living for a long time in my own home in the tenements. This was a feeling of being brought close up to that unknown thing which compelled Mitya to go quite pale for a moment, then to blush, to run out into the porch with the violin still in his hand, to survey the yard with an impatient, tender and yet at the same time masculine glance, and to run across the virgin snow straight toward the crate by which she was standing. That unknown thing which compelled him to walk out with Glashenka in a few seconds and respectfully take her hand, which she gave him willingly and proudly. That unknown thing that filled their movements and faces and made him lead her, fearing nothing, while she walked beside him with a lovely smile, a little shy, but trusting him completely. That unknown thing which suddenly transformed this snow-covered yard, these crates and this chill, winter sky—not only for them but for me also, for I vaguely guessed at it.

Transfixed by delight and happiness, I watched them.

I started back when they came up to the porch, as though they were not real people but some magical beings who might vanish if they really so desired. They did not close the door behind them, and I came to myself only when Agasha shouted to me from the kitchen in such a common, coarse voice as though what had happened had not happened so far as she was concerned.

* * *

Mitya was not giving any concert, nor was he preparing to perform at the Nobles' Club. He intended to marry Glashenka, that was the reason for his civilian suit.

Evidently I must have worn an air of triumph when I went to Andrei with my solution to the riddle, for he looked at me for a long time and then said, with interest, "You're twitching your nose like a rabbit."

I wanted to tease him with my knowing something which he didn't. But I didn't succeed. Suddenly, Mother came in a cab and took me home.

## ZAMOSTYE

Nothing seemed to have changed in our room during the time that I had spent at the Lvovs'. The dark-red chest-of-drawers with the embroidered runner over it, the dining table and the other little table in the corner, on which stood the sewing machine, were still in their former places. As before, rugs and mats made of coloured rags hung and lay about the room; Mother made them to sell but recently they had not been selling, because life in war-time was expensive and such things as rugs were more or less a luxury. In its usual place hung the poster announcing Alexander Ostrovsky's play *Poverty Is No Crime*; exactly in the middle of the list of "Characters and Performers" was to be found P. N. Vlasenkov—that was my father's name. In her place, too, was our neighbour "Madame Jules," whose real name was Nastasya Vasilyevna and on whose door were stuck magic signs and stars cut out of coloured paper. Nastasya Vasilyevna's business was telling fortunes from cards and she "forecast the future," that is, she advised people which educational institution they should go to after leaving the *gymnasium*. All was as of old. Except that the kitten, which in the autumn I had found in the Ploskaya, had become a big shaggy tomcat, and the canary had stopped singing and sat all ruffled up, angry and sad.

Very soon, though, I realized that much had changed.

Even while I was lying in bed at the Lvovs and Mother was coming to see me every day I felt that she behaved towards me differently from before. With Agnia Petrovna she talked proudly, as though to show that there was no difference between them, but with me she talked hurriedly and wretchedly, as though she were in some way guilty towards me. Now it seemed to me all the time that she was concealing something from me—concealing it and fearing that I might suspect it. I did not need to be suspicious, though, to know that if Mother wept at night and sat on the bed with a fixed stare that meant that something had happened to Father again.

It was very strange that, although I had turned seven when my father went off to Kamchatka, my ideas of him were somehow inconsistent, so that I imagined him sometimes one way and sometimes another. I had just got used to the fact that Daddy worked at the Spiritual Consistory when he came home wearing the uniform of the Voluntary Fire-Fighting Society, that is to say, in a shining bronze helmet, with some black, rattling cords on his chest. He frequently "changed his appointment," as Mother put it, and it was hard to remember him, because in every new job he felt himself to be a completely different person. Each time he was very pleased, swore to Mummy and me that he would give up drinking and talked a lot about the importance of his job to the State, so that it began to seem to me, for example, that if Daddy had refused to become a paid employee of the Voluntary Fire-Fighting Society, Russia might have perished through careless playing with fire.

I remember Mother taking me one day to a matinee of *Eighty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.* It was a fairy-like scene, very interesting and exciting for me because it actually took place under water and there was a big green shark with its jaw fixedly open. Daddy performed in this play. I didn't recognize him because he came on the stage only once, in a sort of bathrobe, and said in a hollow voice, "No, this is a vessel!"

Mother explained to me, however, that this was Daddy and that it was so hard to hear him because he was under the water. In the second act he had nothing to do and, along with other actors, he blew on the gauze which represented the sea.

This good time soon came to an end because it started to rain, the showman was ruined, and Father received only eleven rubles and fifty kopeks for the entire season.

Then there were other jobs: he came home dressed as a porter, then as a postman, as though his life had become a sort of quick-change turn such as I had once seen at a circus.

Several years had passed since then. He had long been away in Kamchatka and we expected him to return in 1917 with a capital of 3,548 rubles, not counting valuable skins which had cost him nothing, because he was working as a shop-assistant and the Kamchadals (so he said) held him in such high esteem that nearly every week they gave him a sable and a silver fox. By the time his contract allowed him to leave Kamchatka he would in this way have accumulated, according to my reckoning, 215 sables and as many silver foxes. Mother and I talked so often about those sables and silver foxes that eventually Father began to figure in my mind as a sort of Robinson Crusoe, wearing a pointed fur cap, a fur jacket, fur breeches and fur boots, all made from sables and silver foxes. He was sitting on a rock and in front of him stood a naked black man Friday with feathers on his head. I had seen a picture like that in *Niva*.

This image of my father, which pleased me very much, gradually became the main one in my mind, obliterating all the others.

Mother could not only make rugs and mats, she was also a very good dressmaker, having learnt her trade in Petersburg. During the war, however, she received fewer and fewer orders and so had to send me out to work, first at Valuyev's rag-picking workshops and then as scullery-maid at Almazov's tavern. The worse our situation grew the more powerful became my mental picture of Father. He was short, but now I began to imagine him as being tall. He would bring home a huge sum of money, and furs as well, and I wouldn't need to go on cleaning knives and forks with powdered brick, and Mother wouldn't have to sit up sewing all night, waking me up to thread her needle for her because towards dawn she was almost too tired to see properly.

In 1915 Daddy sent us a letter in which he wrote not one word about the war, which reinforced my conviction of his extraordinary might and power. In Lopakhin the *gymnasium* boys were studying in two shifts because their new building had been taken over for use as a military sick-bay. Every night there was a search for deserters in our suburb, nearly all the cabbies had been conscripted into the Army and even the *troikas* were being driven by boys or women—but all this meant nothing to him far away in Kamchatka.

Was Mother's opinion of Father's doings in Kamchatka as high as mine? I didn't know. She never complained, but I could see that it was hard for her. All the time something was seething in her heart and she had to keep a strong hold on herself to stop this from forcing its way out. At this time she used to groan at night and when I woke up and cried out in fear, "What's the matter, Mummy?" she would reply, with a hollow groan, "Don't ask me."

* * *

Mother was not the only one, however, with whom something I didn't understand had happened during the six weeks I had spent at the Lvovs'. Everything was as usual at home; Nastasya Vasilyevna dropped in from time to time, just as she used to, with a cigarette between her lips and coughing (she was consumptive), to poke fun to her heart's content at the fools of shopkeepers who came to her to have their fortunes told. As before, carts carried dirty rags of many colours to Valuyev's workshops. Yet everything had been given a new twist somehow. I felt this especially when I looked in at the "pull-up for cabmen" which was opposite our house.

It was ten miles from Lopakhin to the railway station, but the drivers went not only to the station but also to the neighbouring small town of Petrov.

Whenever they decided on a spree, the local merchants for some reason liked to go over to Petrov, though it was a dirty little place, much smaller than Lopakhin, and stood not by a river but in a dreary fir-wood. Among the drivers there were both "singles" and "trebles." The latter drove *troikas*; they wore blue kaftans and flat velvet caps with peacock feathers in them; they were rich and treated the "singles" with disdain.

When the war broke out nearly all the cabmen were taken for the Army, but some of the "trebles" returned, having, as people said in the tenements, "bought themselves out." Towards morning they drew up outside the tea-house and, leaving their horses in the yard, went in and sat silently in the chairs, wearing silk shirts belted with sashes from which dangled their combs.

It had always seemed to me a little queer that all these things should already have been in existence when I came into the world—my home, the people around me, the earth, the sun which so punctually rose and set. But I never felt the slightest doubt about the pre-existence of these *troika*-drivers. Long before I was born, they were already sitting there in their silk shirts, sweaty, bearded, with their collars undone, drinking tea for a long time and then turning their glasses upside down and saying "Amen."

And yet now, when I came back home, something had changed in this eternal tea-drinking scene.

In the first place, new people had turned up at the inn; thin, restless people in Caucasian fur caps and army greatcoats. I heard a policeman ask one of these soldiers, "What regiment are you from?"

He replied, "Beaten-up front-liners, the Forty-and-Niners."

He laughed when the policeman gaped at this unexpected answer.

In the second place, Sinitsa had appeared at the tea-house. Sinitsa was a *troika*-driver who was famous even in peacetime for having horses worth 500 rubles each and driving only "merchants and gentry." He disappeared in the second year of the war, but now he had returned and bought a *troika* with a caparison and lanterns. The caparison was blue, with tassels, and was flung on when the *troika* drove out, and for the smart effect Sinitsa had his lanterns aglow on the shafts. He was a small, ugly man, and wore a black beard and moustache, between which red lips hung open unpleasantly. His eyes glittered when he spoke and then you suddenly noticed that the whites were yellow. At those moments I always remembered that my mother had told me that, before the war, he had taken an officer into the woods and killed him.

Sinitsa did little driving nowadays. Splendidly dressed in a blue undercoat, unfastened, beneath which a red silk shirt was visible, and with patent leather boots on, he used to sit in the tea-house and read the *Penny Newspaper* aloud.

"From the point of view of the National Progressive Bloc, the Universities ought to be closed for the duration," he said one day. "The students should be sent to the trenches. There the gentlemen could take their choice—lockjaw or a bullet!"

For a long time I had wondered whether Sinitsa was a "Right" or a "Left," but after these words I decided that he was a "Right."

On the whole, the *troika*-drivers were "Rights," while the workers from the tannery who sometimes went to the tea-house were, of course, "Lefts." Sinitsa used to read the *Penny Newspaper* in a loud voice on purpose while these workers were having their bread and tea—which they did hurriedly and not at all in the fashion of the cabmen. Some of them glanced sullenly in his direction, others with an expression of indifference.

All this, of course, was politics. When I was at the Lvovs', I imagined that the only point of politics was to explain why Mitya had been expelled and blacklisted. But I was all wrong, of course!

Meat and butter disappeared from Lopakhin—that was politics. Somebody called Protopopov became Minister of Internal Affairs—that was politics, too. When the tannery workers went on strike the manager told them, "I'll pick up men as good as you off the snow," and that likewise was politics. One day I saw a large contingent of political prisoners passing through Lopakhin in chains. An old woman rushed towards the prisoners (later I heard that she had recognized her son amongst them) and a mounted policeman struck her in the face with his whip. Then I realized that politics meant not only the queue for meat, Mitya's blacklisting, and Protopopov, but something much more serious, something which made people quarrel and divided them one from another and yet at the same time united them, linking together extraordinarily remote events and things.

## THE LETTER. MOTHER'S CHILDHOOD. AT THE LVOVS' AGAIN

I didn't need to go to the tavern any more because, while I was ill, Almazov had engaged another scullery-maid. Nastasya Vasilyevna gave me some work copying out *The New Complete Magician and Oracle*. This was a rare book which she had borrowed from a second-hand bookseller, and paid 20 kopeks a day just to read it. I applied myself to this work with such fervour that Mother was worried by it; she believed that people "overstrained the heart" by reading and writing.

The gendarme I'd seen one day at Agasha's came that evening to see Nastasya Vasilyevna. I was about to leave, but she said, "Carry on writing, Tanya, you won't be in my way." I carried my work to that part of the room which was partitioned off by a carpet. The gendarme had come with his wife (he went everywhere with her). At first he said nothing about wanting to have his fortune told but talked of how it had become almost impossible to serve in the police force. The mood of the public was again as it had been in 1905, while the food and clothing provided were a good deal worse. His wife also said that things were worse and mentioned that Nikolai Nikolayevich (that was the gendarme's name) had myocarditis. I remembered the name of this disease because Agnia Petrovna also had it and often spoke of it.

Nastasya Vasilyevna politely agreed with them, though she wished they would not take so long over their business. Several times I noticed her purse her lips irritably. But then the gendarme suddenly produced a bottle of wine from the pocket of his greatcoat and Nastasya Vasilyevna cheered up.

I won't describe how they drank, that wouldn't be of any interest. The gendarme wanted to talk about his superiors and began, "Our Colonel is a curious fellow."

But his wife interrupted him and he fell silent. He was a coarse but timid man and obviously very much afraid of her. After a time, Nastasya Vasilyevna got down to the fortune-telling and then it became clear why these people had come to her. The authorities had suggested that he should undertake detective work and transfer into the Army so as to listen to conversations among the soldiers and report who was talking in favour of revolution and, therefore, against the Tsar, and in what circumstances.

"Just listening and taking notes with a pencil," the gendarme explained. "There's a wonderful gift from the Queen of Heaven for you!"

He was dubious about becoming a detective, the more so because the mood in the Army was no better than at home. One gendarme of his acquaintance had gone into the Army and found himself "shifting treacle with a gimlet." In short, the gendarme had decided to have his fortune told and now his only hope was that Nastasya Vasilyevna would help him find his way out of this difficult situation.

I sat at my little table copying away and listening with half an ear to the fortune-telling. I was interested to hear what Nastasya Vasilyevna would say to the gendarme. It would certainly not be anything good. She hated gendarmes and called them "grabbers." Through a tear in the rag carpet I could see her thin good-natured face with its hollow cheeks, her greying red hair and her Gypsy ear-rings. She pretended to be a Gypsy and from time to time would say, "*cha odarik, cha sever*"—"come hither, come quickly," or "*khokhavesa*"—"you are cheating." That was all that Nastasya Vasilyevna knew in Gypsy language.

I could not see the gendarme, except for his nose and moustache, but I could easily visualize from the thick bristling ends of his moustache the stolid attention with which he was listening to Nastasya Vasilyevna.

Several times I nodded over the *Magician and Oracle* and dozed off, but the gendarme still could not make up his mind whether to become a detective or not. The simplest expressions, such as "the King's house," "spade interest" or "castles in the air," frightened him. "What does that mean?" he would ask.

And Nastasya Vasilyevna at last said to him, angrily, "You're a gendarme, well, then, remain a gendarme! At least, spurs jingle, people can hear. . . ."

It seemed to me that somewhere Mother was weeping and suddenly I didn't want to turn away from something good which I was seeing in my dreams, to these tears and sufferings I could not understand. I peeped under the carpet—yes, Mother was there! The gendarme was gone, Nastasya Vasilyevna was sitting where he had sat, and Mother was walking up and down the room holding a piece of paper in her hand and reading from it—I realized at once that these were somebody else's words.

" 'They took two members of our *artel* off to the Army,' " she read. " 'One of them lodged a protest with the military tribunal, but nothing came of it. So I am now the only one in the shop and business is going splendidly. We have two cinemas now. Black flour costs two kopeks a pound.' "

I sat clutching my knees and wished that she would get quickly over that terrible part, which was making her stop from time to time, clench her teeth and look up at Nastasya Vasilyevna.

" 'You ask me to come home,' " she continued, " 'but I know that damned life, and I'd rather go to the front than live, as Pushkin says, "an old man with his old woman, three and thirty years. . ." ' For him I'm an old woman!" Mother cried in an unfamiliar, harsh voice.

Nastasya Vasilyevna nodded. Between her lips she held a cigarette which had gone out and which she rolled from one corner of her mouth to the other, a thoughtful, angry expression on her face.

" 'Three and thirty years,' " Mother repeated with bitterness. " 'That's why I've decided to make my home here. Believe me, there's no going back, my destiny is being decided, and if there's to be a reckoning I'll answer for everything. Or, at least, until 1921, when my new contract will end—five years without deduction of interest in kind.' Good, isn't it?"

Nastasya Vasilyevna nodded again.

"Not a word about how we're to live here!"

I stopped listening to her. Was it possible that Father would never come back to us? That was why Mother didn't sleep at nights. She hadn't spoken to me about this letter because she was ashamed that Father was deserting her. He had thrown us over because life with us would be hard, while in Kamchatka he would be paid wages without deduction of some interest or other "in kind."

I didn't cry. But if he had appeared before me at that moment in the magnificent costume in which my imagination had clothed him, but which he probably never wore, I would have behaved as though I didn't know him. I shouldn't have got angry, like Mother. I would have asked him in an indifferent tone, "Who are you?" And, had he gone down on his knees to me, I would rather have died than forgive him.

* * *

Formerly I had never paid much attention to Mother's stories; it always seemed to me that she was talking not about herself but about somebody else. Now, however, every evening I begged her to talk to me and listened and listened endlessly.

"My father decided to send me to the city to learn to be a dressmaker. But what did I find when I went to learn my trade? There were two of us girls and our mistress made us sleep in the passage with her dog. We liked this dog; it was shaggy and warm and there was a terrible draught from under the door, Tanya. . . . But my father came and took me away from that dressmaker. There were six in our family and he only earned 75 kopeks a day as a worker; but he was a proud man and said that he wouldn't allow any daughter of his to sleep beside a dog. Then my mother's cousin came to stay with us. He was a tailor and he helped me to get into the Court dressmaker's."

I had heard many a time how Mother had worked at the Court dressmaker's in the Malaya Konyushennaya, but it had never before occurred to me to put myself in the place of the little girl of twelve who every morning left some mysterious Narva Gate and walked two and a half hours to her work. Two and a half hours! Why, in that time you could walk round our Lopakhin three times at least.

"Why didn't I ride to work? Because it cost money to take the horse-tram—six kopeks inside and four on top—and my father was still a hammerman at the Putilov Works and still only getting 75 kopeks. So there I was, walking from Chugunny Lane to Narva Gate, then along Old Peterhof Avenue and Ekaterinhof Avenue, past the Mariinsky Theatre, and then I was quite near—it was just along Kazanskaya Street. But at night, when I went home—that was frightful, Tanya! Coming up to Narva Gate, there was a public house, then a footbridge, over the River Tarakanovka. Then I had to cross a field, go past some ruins, and another public house—really, there was one at every step. I didn't walk on the pavement, which was made of rotten planks, but in the roadway, and even then I had to cross from one side to the other all the time.

It was dark and frightening, there were always drunks about and there was always a chance of being beaten. And I worked there for three years, learning my trade no worse than the others. I made sarafans—that was a sort of formal dress, made of velvet, coloured lilac, blue or yellow. I made sarafans and I had to sew them in such a way that the fitting might be made without pins—as the dress was put on, so it was taken off. And my wages were eight rubles and fifty kopeks. I said, 'Madame Brizac (that was our mistress), I've been working here for three years and I've been making dresses for Princess Usupova for six months.' But she replied, 'You won't get any rises out of me, my girl. Such a poor and ignorant creature as you shouldn't be so presumptuous.' I went to the forewomen, but they said, 'Did you kiss her hand?' 'For what?' I demanded, 'for my work?' And one of the older women heard what I said and told me, 'You're a youngster, you're living at the factory, feelings are running high there, and my advice to you is to keep your mouth shut.' "

Up to this point Mother had been talking in a loud voice, evidently with the idea of showing the entire house that she was not one to kiss the hand of any Madame Brizac. After uttering the words "feelings are running high," however, the voice dropped to a whisper and I guessed that she was going to talk about Vasily Alexeyevich Bystrov. Vasily Alexeyevich was a worker like my grandfather, but he was often in prison, so that eventually he "went underground." Prison didn't change him at all and the moment he'd be released he'd take up work in some "organization"—Mother spoke this word so quietly that I could make it out only by her lip movements. He was a "Bolshevik," like the elder Rubin who had been arrested the previous year.

Why did Mother's face become tender when she talked about this man? Why did she meditate and then, with a sudden laugh, recall that Vasily Alexeyevich had invited her one day to go for a walk to Ekaterinhof and how he had taken it into his head to walk along a revolving shaft and had fallen off? Why did she always pass from talking about Vasily Alexeyevich to tell the story about how, one day, she was riding in a horse-tram and a respectable gentleman with fluffy moustaches sat down next to her and asked her what she was reading?

"And I was reading Tolstoi's *Resurrection* and had just realized that Nekhlyudov had given up all his wealth for

Katyusha Maslova's sake. The gentleman said to me, 'You are right. Allow me to see you home!' But I replied, 'No, I'm from a working-class family and we're not suited.' "

That gentleman with the moustaches was my father; and there Mother's story ended and her tears began....

* * *

I passed the "depot" several times. A thick roof of snow overhung the signboard but the big white letters still thrust up their little tails as cheerfully as ever. What had happened in that house since I left it? Had Agnia Petrovna come back? Had Mitya married Glashenka? It was hardly likely, for news of such an event would have reached the tenements where I lived. Had Andrei deduced a final conclusion from his "lies chart"? I could, of course, simply have gone to see him for we were good friends by now. But it wasn't easy to call on somebody who hadn't invited you. Besides, the Lvovs might think that I had come to remind Agnia Petrovna of her promise to send me to Madame Krzhevskaya's secondary school.

But a day came which was to cause me to go to that house, and to stir up a proper storm there.

The day in question began very well. From early morning the canary sang in its cage. That turned out to be a good omen. Bread made from sifted flour was then hard to get, but I had obtained some, which even had raisins in it. We sat down to breakfast in high spirits and Mother, as she always did when she was cheerful, talked about the walk to Ekaterinhof and the special "gardeners' path" which the girls from Starorussky district strolled along whenever they came to work in the kitchen-gardens during the summer. This path could be seen from afar because the girls wore pink, yellow and green dresses, with skirts reaching to the ground, with frills.... And my mother would go off into a detailed description of the "gardeners' " dress.

We had long before set aside fifteen rubles to buy a winter coat for me and some high-boots for Mother and, after breakfast, we went to the market. True, we kept discovering that if we bought a coat of the best quality there would be nothing left for boots, while if we bought boots of the best quality, we'd have nothing left for a coat, so that we wandered about the whole day and got so exhausted that we had to sit down at the money-changer's and eat some rice and fish pie with onions. In the end, however, we did buy an excellent coat with a castor collar and boots which laced up—they were quite good and reached almost to the knee.

It was already dark when we got back home. Mother began to warm up the supper and I lay on the bed with my legs up, frozen stiff. Suddenly I heard Mother whistling. She could whistle marvellously and when I was a little girl she never used to sing me cradle songs but always whistled them. That was long ago, though, and in the last few years I had forgotten that Mother was able to whistle. Something old and very much better than the present must have come back to her mind. . . . I jumped down from the bed and gave her a big kiss.

Then we had our supper. Mother went out and I went into Nastasya Vasilyevna's room to go on copying out *The New Complete Magician and Oracle*. I could have done the work at home but Nastasya Vasilyevna used to show me what parts to copy and what to leave out.

My eyelids felt heavy after the tiring and frosty day in the market, but I screwed my eyes up firmly so as to drive sleep away and went on writing. It was rarely quiet in our house but now a hush fell all of a sudden. There was only the muffled hum of voices from the tea-house, and somewhere a harness jingled, sleigh-runners creaked, and a cabman shouted at his horses. . . .

Far away, far away! But now nearer, and still nearer. Nearer yet, and then it all stopped, but not outside the tea-house, which was where *troikas* usually pulled up, but at our own front door. What miracle was this?

Somebody ran quickly up the stairs and flung the door open without knocking. It was Sinitsa.

"Nastasya Vasilyevna, are you at home?" he called impatiently. "I've brought a young lady, she wants her fortune told. We're on our way to Petrov. Well? Must be quick."

He said "a young lady" just as a Gypsy would.

Why the idea came to me at that moment that Sinitsa had brought Glashenka and that she and Mitya were going to Petrov to get married, I don't know. The idea crossed my mind even before the *troika* had pulled up outside our house. Even before Sinitsa had run down the stairs and other, lighter steps were heard coming up, I knew, I was firmly convinced, that it was Glashenka. And I wasn't mistaken.

She was wearing the same white jacket in which I had first seen her at the Lvovs', but she held her cap in her hand and her hair, which had been carelessly pinned up, was on the point of falling over her shoulders. She looked quite different from that first time, though just as fragile and with the same faint flush on her delicate face. But now there was something desperate in this delicacy, as though she had decided, or was about to decide, upon taking a dangerous, reckless step.

Nastasya Vasilyevna moved in the direction of her visitor and Glashenka suddenly threw herself towards her. It was as though Nastasya Vasilyevna, whom she was seeing for the first time, was the one who could save her—from whom?

"What is it, my young lady, my dear?"

Glashenka recoiled as violently as she had rushed forward.

She sat down, leaning her elbows on the table, clasping her head in her hands. Her hair, which had come undone, fell over her hands, but she did not put it in order. Nastasya Vasilyevna removed the lamp from the table to the chest-of-drawers so as to make room for her fortune-telling. The light fell on Glashenka, shining straight into her face, but she did not move away or shield her eyes, as though on purpose that I should always remember her.

"And trouble will come to you through this king," Nastasya Vasilyevna was saying, slowly. "Through this trouble you will obtain riches. And there is a long journey ahead of you. A late one," she added. Though it had long been dark and it was obvious that Glashenka had a late journey ahead of her, she spoke as if it were not this one but another, dread journey that was revealed in the cards. "But this king is false, and only an empty dream awaits you with him."

I had heard Nastasya Vasilyevna telling fortunes thousands of times and these customary words of hers, which she put together, now this way and now that, trying to foretell "destiny," sounded very familiar to me. Even more familiar was the troubled expression of faith and hope which I saw on the faces of the women who came to her. It seemed to me that in their presence she experienced a half-conscious shame. That evening, however, I listened to Nastasya Vasilyevna as though she were a fortune-teller who really knew things that nobody else in the whole world knew.

The queen of hearts lay between the seven and eight of diamonds—that meant faithlessness. Then came spades and more spades; the eight, which meant tears, and the ten, which meant separation. And Nastasya Vasilyevna named each one: separation and tears.

Did she understand something which I didn't no matter how long I looked at those slim hands pressed to the girl's head, at the hair falling over the hands, and at the sombre face and the wide-open eyes? Of course, she did. It was not without reason that suddenly, tearing herself away from the cards, she said sadly, not in her "fortune-telling" voice, but in her ordinary one:

"Ah, young lady, you will deceive yourself, and who will be to blame?"

And Glashenka flinched and looked her straight in the face.

This was the moment when I suddenly feared that Glashenka was not going to Petrov with Mitya to get married. Why did he remain below? What was he doing down in the porch, in the frost? I heard Sinitsa ask him something; he didn't answer.

At last, talking together, they began coming up the stairs. The cabman came in first. He remained by the door and Mitya stayed in the corridor as though hiding himself from us. Why?

"It's time, young lady, time," said Sinitsa.

He reeked of the cold, he flicked his whip against his felt boots and, behind him in the darkness, stood Mitya, silent. Mitya had not spoken and still had not come into the room. Why was this?

Quietly I went out into the corridor. It wasn't Mitya. It was Rayevsky. I knew at once that it was he, though I'd seen him only once before, for a second, on the driver's seat of the sleigh which Mitya was chasing. He was wearing civilian clothes, a big sheepskin coat with a turned-up collar, and stood to one side, as though hiding himself. Under his beaver hat I could see his plump, anxious face. I gave a low gasp and ran back into the room.

* * *

Stories like this were not new to me. At the "Modern" Cinema I had seen a film in which a girl was in love with her fiancé, but she ran away with another man. There were serious reasons for that though. Her fiancé was an old man and he didn't like her to act on the stage. This wasn't at all the same kind of affair. Glashenka appeared before me as I had seen her—not this Glashenka, gloomy, with disordered hair, but a gay Glashenka, happy when Mitya ran out of the house to her, shy when he offered her his hand, and proud when she took it freely, like a queen. She loved him! Why had she suddenly fallen out of love with him? How could she have given up Mitya for this fat, unpleasant man with short legs who moved about in the corridor like a bear and then came in and, without saying "how do you do?," placed on the table a handful of crumpled three-ruble notes?

I froze with a strange fear. I thought I saw—but perhaps I didn't—Nastasya Vasilyevna, bringing her fortune-telling to an end, pull out a last card at random. It turned out to be the ten of spades, meaning a blow, or a sick-bed. I saw Glashenka knock the cards off the table with a sort of timid gesture, stand up and reel so that she would have fallen had Sinitsa not caught her.

He carried her in his arms down the stairs, but almost dropped her and she went down by herself. I ran out after Nastasya Vasilyevna.

Tripping over his sheepskin coat, Rayevsky sat beside Glashenka and began buttoning up the sleigh-rug. His fingers wouldn't obey him. Sinitsa shouted to his horses, "Hey, you, my lovelies, my darlings!"

And again the harness jingled and the runners creaked, first close at hand and then farther and farther away. We turned back into the house and all the time while Nastasya Vasilyevna, heaving sighs, was pitying Glashenka and abusing Rayevsky, I seemed to hear the distant creaking and jingling of the disappearing sleigh. When I returned to my own room I went on listening for a long time to this sound, as though I could not let Glashenka go away and yet could do nothing to help her, or to stop her.

* * *

How strange her face had looked when she got up and knocked the cards off the table! I was sorry for her. But I was still sorrier for Mitya. Perhaps I ought to run off to see him at once? And I imagined myself running along the river bank where the poplars rattled their boughs with a sad, hollow sound. The Olginsky Bridge appeared in the bright moonlight. There was the "depot." Mitya was not asleep but was playing his violin. The sealed tube of curare lay beside him on the table. I trembled as I told him that Glashenka had run off with Rayevsky. He replied, "I despise her."

And he went back to his violin as though nothing had happened.

Perhaps, really, nothing had happened? Perhaps he had quarrelled with Glashenka? Perhaps he no longer loved her? After all, Andrei had said that "for people like Mitya the past in general means nothing." Perhaps his circle of friends had at last won him over and he had changed his mind about marrying?

I lay in bed and thought and listened, in my imagination, to the sound, far off in the distance, of the harness, the creaking of the sleigh-runners, the hollow beat of the horses' hooves on the well-trodden, hard road.

* * *

When I left the Lvovs Andrei had lent me a book, so that I had a good excuse, after all, to call on him and to ask him whether Mitya knew about Glashenka eloping with Rayevsky. Previously I had thought it would not be proper if I returned the book before I had finished reading it, but now I made up my mind to return it especially as it was very dull.

It proved a little hard for me to bring myself to go to the "depot" and ring, not at the kitchen door, but at the front door. I did this, nevertheless, and when Agasha opened the door I said, "Good morning" politely to her.

She started to exclaim about my fine coat and how nice I looked. I replied, "Thank you. Is Andrei at home?"

At that moment he came out of his room, looking rather pale, with his throat bound up, and said:

"Hullo. You're a good sort to come and see me. Come in, I've got something to show you."

Nothing about his room had changed, except that it smelt strongly of tincture of valerian and a large glass container stood on the floor. I noticed at once that there were cockroaches in it; not the common, reddish-coloured ones but the black sort which, they say, people breed purposely so that they may bring them good luck.

Andrei gave me an attentive look. I think he was pleased that I did not look astonished.

"I'm putting them to sleep," he said. "D'you see? Then I'll dissect them. D'you want to help me? Somebody's got to sit on that container."

It appeared that the need for somebody to sit on the container arose because if one merely closed it with a piece of cardboard or plywood the cockroaches would not fall asleep or would do so only after suffering terrible torments. Andrei had already been cudgelling his brains over this problem for some time when I arrived. He had already poured some ether-valerian tincture into the container, and the ether would evaporate if somebody didn't sit on the thing. He would have done the sitting himself only he had to prepare some materials.

"Well, all right, if you like," I said.

I wanted to take my coat off, but Andrei said that it would be even better if I kept it on, and so there I was, in my new winter coat, sitting on the container.

This was a ridiculous situation in which I could not, of course, begin to ask about Mitya, whether he had changed his mind about marrying Glashenka and whether he knew that she had run away. I only asked:

"Will they be long?"

"Will they be long at what?"

"Going to sleep?"

Andrei said that he hadn't put black cockroaches to sleep before but they were similar to beetles and beetles did eventually pass out under ether.

"Aren't you comfortable sitting there?" he asked solicitously. "Would you like me to bring you something to read?"

I thanked him and declined.

It was not only about Mitya that it was not proper to talk while sitting on that container. I asked, "Well, what's the news?"

And even this polite, ordinary question seemed to me out of place, somehow. Andrei, however, didn't appear to notice my embarrassment. He squatted on his haunches and gazed with a preoccupied air at the cockroaches for a long time. Then he went out and came back with the board Agasha used for mincing meat, and began sticking pins in it.

Nonchalantly I asked, "Why are you going to dissect them?"

He looked at me unseeing and thinking of something else; I knew that expression of his, with brows lifted in concentration.

"You see, I want to find out whether they have hearts. I could have just asked Uncle; he's bound to know, because he even told me what the black cockroach is called in Latin. But I want to do it myself. I was arguing about it with Valka and he said that he believes only what he sees with his own eyes. That's his motto: 'Seeing is believing.' He doesn't believe in God because he can't see him."

Valka was Korzhich; that meant Andrei was friends with him again.

"But it is interesting, isn't it?"

I agreed that it was. The cockroaches were climbing on each other, feeling for the wall of the container from a distance with their antennae. I could see them only from one side and then only if I bent low and lifted my coat. In my opinion they had no intention of going to sleep, though I was sitting very firmly and could swear that not a particle of the ether-valerian was being wasted. But Andrei said that they were going to sleep.

"They're excited," he explained. "Cats go mad from valerian, but cockroaches probably first get excited and then go to sleep."

We were silent. Then I asked:

"How's Agnia Petrovna? Is she back from Petrograd?"

"Yes."

"Have they taken Mitya off the black list?"

"Yes. He's going to Ivanovsk."

I resolved to ask about Glashenka when the cockroaches had gone to sleep. But I couldn't hold out.

"What's he up to? Has he changed his mind about marrying?"

"No."

He hadn't changed his mind! I nearly jumped down from the container but checked myself in the nick of time and only shifted my position a little.

"That's interesting. Do you remember telling me they might elope to Petrov to get married?"

"I remember. What about it?"

"Nothing."

I was silent. The cockroaches went on waving their antennae and again I couldn't stand it.

"I bet you they won't elope."

There was probably a tragic note in my voice, for Andrei put his board down and turned to me in amazement.

"Why do you think so?"

"Because Glashenka's eloped already."

Never before had I seen the expression on his face change so rapidly. A moment before it was obvious that he was deeply engrossed in the cockroaches, as though: "Cockroaches" was written on his face. But now, in a second, that was changed to: "Glashenka has eloped."

"That can't be," he said slowly. "What do you mean, she's eloped?"

"Last night she came to see Nastasya Vasilyevna to have her fortune told, and that Rayevsky was with her. Nastasya Vasilyevna said that I wasn't to tell anybody that they had come, but since Mitya doesn't know I think it would be mean to keep quiet about it."

I lifted my coat and looked at the cockroaches with such hatred that if they had hearts, as Andrei surmised, these must have been wrung by such a look.

"She didn't want to do it."

"Who didn't?"

"Glashenka. Not that she didn't want to do it, but she was upset. She was desperate," I said, solemnly, "because she loves Mitya and was eloping with another."

Here I ought to have told him how Glashenka had rushed up to Nastasya Vasilyevna when she came in, and how she had stared at the cards with contracted brows as though she expected salvation to come from those tattered bits of pasteboard. But I couldn't talk about such things while sitting on cockroaches.

"Look," said Andrei, "you stay here and I'll go straight away."

"Where?"

"To him."

He wore a determined expression now. He pressed his lips together and went from the room.

It was probably unkind of me but, after waiting a moment, I cautiously got up from the container and followed Andrei on tiptoe. It was more than I could bear to be putting cockroaches to sleep at such a moment! Besides, I hoped that they would go off all right under the mincing-board, which I had placed on the container.

Mitya was reading in the dining-room. He was surrounded by books, determined, no doubt, to get that gold medal in Ivanovsk. The door into the corridor was open. When I approached it on tiptoe Andrei was standing by the sideboard. He had evidently only just begun to speak, for I saw Mitya lift a displeased face to his brother, annoyed that Andrei was disturbing him.

My heart beat violently. I was sure that Andrei was going to say to him, straight out, "She's run off with Rayevsky," just as that day he had asked me bluntly, "Do you want to know why my nose is swollen?"

But not at all. He was hesitating and I could see that it was very hard for him.

"Don't get excited about this," he said gently at last, "especially as it may turn out to be untrue. But, you see, this is what's happened. . . . Tanya's come to see me and she tells me that Glashenka was at the fortune-teller's yesterday."

"At the fortune-teller's?"

"Yes. And Tanya says that she wasn't alone." Andrei spoke much like a grown-up. "She was with Rayevsky."

He stopped speaking. He didn't look at Mitya.

"The short of it is that they were going away. Tanya says they were on their way to Petrov."

Mitya stood up. I never thought anyone could have gone so pale. He uttered a brief exclamation, I don't know what it was, but he did, and gripped the table. I thought that he held on to the table so as not to fall down, but he suddenly jerked it and knocked it over with a crash, so that he broke the beautiful white table-lamp and scattered his books and papers about the floor.

Then everything happened very quickly. Mitya rushed out into the hall and tore his greatcoat off the peg. The tapping of a stick sounded in the corridor; it was the old doctor, who had heard Mitya's shout and come out of his room asking in alarm, "What's happened?"

Andrei said in a queer voice, "Uncle, come here, quickly, quickly!"

And I saw that Mitya, his eyes half-closed, was standing by the wall, swaying, and touching it with his hands. But at last he stepped forward and flung open the door and, when Andrei and I rushed out after him, he was already running through the gate and we caught a glimpse only of his greatcoat, which he had flung over his shoulder.

## PAVEL PETROVICH

From that day onward I began visiting the Lvovs again; first of all because the old doctor liked me, and secondly, because it really was interesting to discover whether cockroaches had hearts.

Before going on, however, let me finish telling about Mitya.

Agnia Petrovna was not at home when we told Mitya that Glashenka had gone off with Rayevsky, and Andrei decided that it was necessary "to find Mother at once, because Mitya may kill himself." He led me to Mitya's room and took the tube of curare from his table.

"Maybe this isn't curare," he said, "but hide it just in case. Lend me your kerchief."

He wrapped the tube up and told me to carry it in my left hand.

"You might fall," he explained, "and when people fall they instinctively put out their right hand. Now go off home with it and I'll look for Mother."

It was silly of me to agree. In the time it took me to go home and come back, important events might happen at the Lvovs'. I thought of this, but too late—when I was already crossing the Olginsky Bridge. The only thing to do now was to take the poison home and then return as quickly as I could.

There was a lot of company in the Lvovs' kitchen (I rang at the kitchen door this time) and there were even some important people amongst them; for instance, a hunchbacked government official whom the *gymnasium* boys spoke of as a tremendously strong man, and others. Agasha was standing at the kitchen stove and talking about Mitya. It appeared that she had worked for the Lvovs since 1904 and that even in those days Mitya was a terror: if he saw another boy or girl, even on the other side of the street, he'd rush at them and start a fight. Then she said that they were looking for Mitya all over the town with no success although it was already five hours since he had left the Rybakovs, gone down Sergiyevskaya Street to the bank of the Tesma and disappeared.

At this point she was about to cry, but refrained because the hunchbacked government official came closer to her and asked:

"What about that poison?"

And Agasha replied, mysteriously:

"We couldn't find that either."

I went on listening, without understanding.

"Obviously he poisoned himself and then jumped into an ice-hole," the official observed.

Agasha burst into tears. They all looked at her pensively, and so did I. Suddenly I understood. The poison! They thought Mitya had poisoned himself with the curare. Till then I had been standing quietly in a corner and was even a little frightened that they might tell me to go away, but now I came forward and stood by Agasha.

"Agasha, dear, does Agnia Petrovna think Mitya has poisoned himself with that curare which was on the table in his room?"

She replied that this was so and that Agnia Petrovna had nearly fainted but now had gone out with a gendarme to look for Mitya's body. Andrei also had gone off that morning, so there was nobody at home.

"Good. Then I shall go to Uncle," I said firmly. "I have something to tell him."

Undoubtedly the old doctor was also worried about Mitya. He got up from his arm-chair the moment I appeared at the door and asked anxiously, "Have they found him?"

I said, "Good day, Uncle Pavel. How are you? What I want to say is this: Agnia Petrovna is worried about nothing. The poison is at my place. That tube with something red in it. Andrei gave it to me. It's in the chest-of-drawers. If you want it, I'll bring it to you."

He looked at me attentively and smiled, though I was not aware of having said anything funny.

"Yes, yes," he said, "we were worried, though I told Anya (that's what he called Agnia Petrovna) that it couldn't be curare and probably wasn't poison at all. Nevertheless, where is Mitya?"

"Look, Uncle Pavel," I said brightly, "aren't you interested to know where Andrei is? You realize, Andrei's lost, too. That gives me comfort."

The doctor was without his spectacles when I came in, but now he put them on and looked at me again as though seeing me for the first time.

"Indeed," he said, "and why does that give you comfort?"

"Because he was worried, too, and would have come back home. But he hasn't and that means that he has a reason."

"Why do you think so?"

I replied like Andrei himself:

"Because I've made a deduction. After all, Uncle Pavel—where could Andrei have been all day long? It's because of Mitya that he hasn't returned home. You've read *The Doom of the Victoria Mines*? He's tracking Mitya, like Nat Pinkerton."

I was so carried away that when I heard the bell ring I didn't at once understand why Agasha exclaimed, "Oh, God!" She ran out into the corridor. I went after her, but immediately turned back because the old doctor, reaching for his stick, which lay on the floor, had nearly fallen over. I handed him his stick.

Agasha's visitors looked out of the kitchen to see who had arrived. It was Mitya. He took off his overcoat in the hall. Walking past Agasha's visitors he made a movement towards them and said sternly, just like Agnia Petrovna, "What's the meaning of this?"

Then he went into his own room and locked the door.

A few minutes later the bell rang again and Andrei came in. He was frozen stiff and remained for a long time without saying anything, sniffing and looking gloomily at his blue fingers. I told him to put them on his stomach, as that was an effective way of warming them. He took my advice.

It turned out that he had been sitting all that time in the yard of the Rubins' house, waiting for Mitya. He hadn't wanted to be seen for fear that Mitya would drive him away. On the whole it all didn't mean a thing, he said, because he had played snowballs with some boys and had got frozen only when these boys had been called in to dinner.

Agnia Petrovna also came in. She had heard somewhere or other that Mitya had turned up. She removed her coat and stood in the hall angrily wiping her pince-nez, which had become blurred. Everybody kept away from her. She went and knocked on Mitya's door, and I heard him say, "Mother, if you can, let's leave it till later."

I went away. For some reason the old doctor kissed me when I looked in to say good-bye to him.

* * *

Pavel Petrovich offered to take me in all the subjects studied at Madame Krzhevskaya's secondary school and I now went to the "depot" as though to school, using the exercise-books and textbooks Andrei gave me. They were arithmetic and geography books, but for nature-study and Russian the doctor said no books were needed, because he could teach me those subjects without any textbooks. I came and sat on a low bench by his feet. Incidentally, he was a strict teacher and I did everything he told me to do. Now that I had grown used to the old doctor and learned to like him, I was not in the least afraid of him. When I went to see him I always felt that, in order to talk to me, he had to return from something very far away, which had not the slightest relation to what went on at the "depot." I felt that he was lonely. For instance, he liked to read the paper and talk about politics, but nobody except me cared to listen to him. I was upset when they were rude to him. He was very glad when Mitya decided to enter the medical faculty and wanted, on that occasion, to read him an article of his which was called "Protective Forces." But Mitya said, "Oh, Uncle, for heaven's sake!" so rudely that Agnia Petrovna rebuked him for it.

The old doctor found it dull staying in his room all the time. Sometimes he went out to sit in the porch, and then Agnia Petrovna at once started to grumble as though it was so hard to put a coat and hat on him and to help him a little into the doorway.

To put it briefly, I don't know why it was, but there were two camps in the "depot," so to speak; in one camp there were Agnia Petrovna and Mitya and in the other—this old man, who was very polite and never complained or asked for anything, but just sat in his room and wrote. It seemed to me that it must be very difficult to be polite when one had to walk leaning on two sticks and wagging one's head as though it were hanging loose from one's body.

I had long wanted to have a talk with Andrei about these strange relationships, especially because Andrei liked Pavel Petrovich and often went to him. For a long time I couldn't bring myself to do this, but at last I did ask Andrei about it. He replied that he could explain, but it wouldn't be worth while because I wouldn't understand anyway.

"Do you know what a 'principle' is?" he asked.

"No."

"Or what a 'microbe' is?"

"No."

"There you are, you see."

But I pestered him and then he explained to me that Agnia Petrovna was angry with the doctor because he had given up his practice because of a principle, that is, he refused to treat sick people for money. Poor people didn't go to other doctors but they went to him because he never took anything from them, or only 20 kopeks at the most. And yet he could earn ten rubles a day if he chose: Andrei had heard Agnia Petrovna say so to Agasha.

He did earn a little, however, spending the money principally on the Petrograd and Moscow medical journals to which he subscribed every year. In short, he was studying microbes, but nothing came of it because experiments were the main thing here, but to conduct experiments one needed apparatuses.

He had once lived in Petersburg but was sent out from that city because he supported a students' strike and spoke against the Tsar at some Congress or other. He didn't come straight to Lopakhin but first spent three years somewhere in Siberia.

"Incidentally," Andrei added, "I've never seen him without a stick. When I was born he was already walking with a stick and then, when I was four, he took to using two sticks."

I asked what Pavel Petrovich was suffering from and Andrei explained that it was a severe rheumatism which he had contracted when he was transported to Siberia. He didn't have any treatment for it because the majority of the remedies, in his opinion, were just a lot of shams, except for two or three which were known already to Hippocrates.

"Do you know who Hippocrates was?"

I tried to maintain a courteous silence to make it appear that I did, but Andrei saw through this and said:

"So you don't know who Hippocrates was!"

And he explained that, in ancient times, there had lived a doctor of this name who didn't need to examine a patient to prescribe a medicine for him. All he needed to do was to look into the patient's eyes and he could tell from that alone whether the patient would get better or not.

It appeared, then, that Agnia Petrovna was angry with her brother because of some principle.

I pondered a long time over this problem and decided that Andrei was wrong. The principle and Hippocrates and all that were things that belonged to the remote past. Now, however, the doctor was old and ill and people always get angry with anybody who is old and ill. I had noticed this already in the case of my grandmother, who had died in 1913—especially when there was no longer any hope that they would ever be able to pay for their bed and board.

The day after Mitya's return I brought the phial of curare back to the "depot" and the old doctor nodded his head in greeting when he saw me.

"Ah, the doom of the Victoria mines! How are your affairs going?"

He was sitting in the porch, all muffled up, except for his long eyebrows which stuck out from under his hat, which was pulled well down on his head.

"Well, have you made your deduction?"

I said to him, "Good day, Uncle Pavel. How are you? A deduction concerning what?"

"Concerning the curare," said the doctor, and laughed.

He was joking, of course, because I had no intention of making any deduction concerning the curare.

I said, "Andrei, by the way, thinks it isn't poison. You have a look at it, Uncle Pavel. Though it's red, it's transparent. But poison—the stuff for bedbugs, for instance—is cloudy."

The doctor took the phial from me and placed it on the handrail. Then he undid his coat and took a penknife from his pocket. He turned the pocket inside out, shaking from it some bits of wadding and some crumbs. He didn't hurry, so that I couldn't imagine what he was about to do. I only gasped when he took the knife in his right hand and struck the glass phial with it.

"Uncle Pavel!"

The end flew off and Uncle Pavel poured some of the curare poison into his palm. He sniffed it, then touched it with his tongue and spat vigorously.

"A-a-a!" I shrieked.

"Shut up, you stupid girl!" he said, angrily.

Then he laughed, threw the phial into the snow and said that it was water, reddened with carmine.

Andrei told me later that quickness in spitting was important in this matter and that in that way he was willing to taste even something called royal water. Water, even royal water, was one thing, and poison quite another. Who else in Lopakhin would taste poison? No, it was clear to me that the doctor was really quite different from any other person whom I'd ever known or seen since I was born.

Mitya left at the end of January and the "depot" became somehow empty without him; they had talked so much about Mitya, and he had caused them so many headaches. Before his departure he called on Glashenka's parents and was with them a terribly long time. Andrei said afterwards that Agnia Petrovna was on the point of looking in his room for a note reading: "Please do not blame anyone for my death." Whenever he was away for any length of time she always looked first of all for such a note.

I asked Andrei why Glashenka eloped with Rayevsky when she loved Mitya? Andrei said that this was a complex question which only science could explain. Literature, he said, was full of instances of this kind. In Ostrovsky's *The Girl Without a Dowry* there was a girl who was on the point of running off with a rich merchant, and when her lover rebuked her she replied, "Too late! Now gold shines and diamonds sparkle before my eyes." Perhaps something like that had happened with Glashenka, especially since Rayevsky's father was a bank manager and the big property called "Pavy" on the outskirts of Lopakhin belonged to him. But they'd eloped not to this estate but to Petrograd, because Rayevsky wanted to move to Petrograd anyway. He wanted to graduate from the Law School and become a diplomat.

* * *

The evening when Mitya went away remains vivid in my memory. His friends saw him off. Agnia Petrovna stood at the gate and watched out for policemen, because the boys sang forbidden songs.

Andrei and I went into the yard and she told us to keep a look-out, too, although the singing was hardly audible outside the double walls, and it was ten o'clock and the policemen were asleep. Later on, cabs drove up to the porch and it appeared that Mitya's friends were going to accompany him the ten miles to the railway station, though it was beyond me how they could all get into two little sleighs. They came out, arms round each other, greatcoats undone and caps on the backs of their heads, and Agnia Petrovna began to be afraid, not of the police this time but of the *gymnasium* authorities. At last everybody was settled in the sleighs, they set off, and that sense of emptiness, which I've already mentioned, came over us.

I now went to the "depot" nearly every day and remained there even when Andrei wasn't at home. Sometimes Agasha asked me to help her, and I would tidy up the rooms or light a stove. More often, however, I sat with the old doctor and read something, or watched while he wrote. We became friends. I told him about Mother and how hard she worked, then about Nastasya Vasilyevna and how she was consumptive and would die soon and that I had copied out *The New Complete Magician and Oracle* for her. The doctor asked me to explain what the cards meant and I told him that there were different ways of telling fortunes. There was the Gypsy way and the French way, called *Le Normand-Etoile*. Then the doctor pulled out at random from the pack the seven, the ten, the king and the knave of diamonds and asked me:

"Tell me, what does that mean?"

"It means," I replied without any hesitation, "that, after going for a walk you will attain your purpose at home and get married, to the annoyance and grief of an elderly relation."

The doctor listened with interest.

"So this is *Le Normand-Etoile*," he said thoughtfully. "I see.... But do you know how many seven times nine is?"

Another time I told him about the gendarme coming with his wife to see Nastasya Vasilyevna, and Pavel Petrovich said cryptically, "The rats are leaving the sinking ship."

I saw that he wanted to talk politics, so I purposely asked:

"Uncle Pavel, what have rats got to do with it?"

And he explained that, in this instance, the monarchy, that is to say the autocracy, was the ship and the rats were those who suspected that it was going to sink. But not everyone suspected this, especially since the autocracy was organizing a plot to crush the people who wanted freedom.

"Do you want freedom, Uncle Pavel?"

He smiled and said, "Yes, indeed!"

In their turn, the landlords and bourgeoisie were also plotting to get rid of the Tsar, because they were afraid the Tsar was not strong enough to cope with the people. Nevertheless, nothing would come of all these plots, because the people were waking up or had already awakened and the overthrow of the autocracy was certain; it was bound to happen—perhaps even within three or four years.

It was very hard to pronounce that phrase: "Overthrow of the autocracy" but eventually I mastered it, and at the same time I told Pavel Petrovich all that I knew about politics, namely, that there were different parties and that, in my opinion, Sinitsa was a "Right" because he wanted to send all the students to the front.

The doctor listened to me and then, to my consternation, declared that all these parties hardly differed from each other.

"Two worlds are in combat," he said. "The world of the rich and the world of the toilers who spend all their lives working for the rich and yet remain poor."

I wanted to ask whether I was a rich person or a poor one, especially as, in the tenements, Mother and I were not considered particularly poor. But he was lost in thought, with fixed gaze, his sad, fading eyes opened wide. And I didn't ask.

Another time he talked about sick people. In his opinion, we fell ill not because anything hurt us but because microbes gnawed at us.

I didn't understand, but nodded my head. And suddenly the old doctor began telling me a story about a certain night-watchman who liked to look through magnifying glasses. It was long ago, two hundred years ago, and not in Russia. This watchman was a crank and was interested, for example, in what goes on in a fly's head or how the eye of a bull is constructed. He made magnifying glasses for himself such as small boys bought in order to burn various words on fences and they were so strong that through them ordinary hairs looked like thick, rough logs.

One day, this man put a little water in a glass tube and examined it through one of his glasses—though it was clear to everybody that, however much you might magnify water, it would still remain water. It turned out, however, that some little creatures swam about in the water—they were so tiny that he did not believe his eyes, and they were not fishes.

"Uncle Pavel, how little were they?" I asked. "Like motes in a sunbeam?"

"Smaller."

"Like a speck of dust?"

"Still smaller."

The only things smaller than a speck of dust were, in my opinion, the eyes of some small insects such as gnats. But it seemed to me silly to compare the little creatures, about which the doctor was talking so seriously, with gnat's eyes.

The night-watchman began to hunt everywhere for these little creatures which, for some reason, he thought were to be found not only in water. And it actually turned out that there were as many as you like in pepper, if it was soaked. The watchman started to breed them; in gravy or compote, I think the doctor said.

He lit the lamps in the evenings and walked in the streets with a gun, crying, "All's well!" During the day he sat over his tiny creatures and watched them through a magnifying glass.

Altogether this was a rather interesting story, though I still didn't understand how the microbes gnawed at us.

I liked the picture drawn for me of the night-watchman walking in the streets and crying, "All's well!" If only we had such a night-watchman in our tenements. As for the little creatures, I wanted to ask why people breed them if they couldn't be of any use. But the doctor's face looked so sad and kind when he told me this story that I didn't put my thought into words.

* * *

One winter's evening the snow was falling in our little out-of-the-way town. The thick white layer on top of the signboard of the "depot" got thicker and thicker and at last collapsed with a quiet sigh. Time was passing, minute by minute. . . .

Even slower the heavy, large snow-flakes floated down, till the air was filled with them, from earth to sky. They drew together and then apart, as though engaged in some unhurried, old-fashioned dance. The wind blew up and they rose in the air, the wind fell and they lay down submissively upon the earth.

Holding an open book on her knees, a girl was sitting at the feet of an old man. She could see his beard and his glasses, which were kept in position with difficulty on the end of his thick nose. She read and he listened. From time to time he corrected her sharply.

Thus passed away my childhood years.

*Chapter II*

# THE OLD DOCTOR

## FOR WHOM?

It was after nine o'clock in the evening. Mother, who was sitting at her sewing, wanted some tea and sent me over to the cabmen's tea-house to get it. Swinging an empty tea-pot I crossed the road and then stopped short. Rubin was coming towards me. He was changed, looked older, wore a rumpled and torn overcoat, and his hands were black. He glanced at me and said in a low voice, "Could you find me some water, young lady?"

It was inconceivable why Rubin, the one who, when he met me, always used to close one eye and put on a humorously grave face, should for any reason at all call me "young lady" and pretend not to know me.

Embarrassed, I replied, "I'll bring some at once," and ran off to the tea-house as fast as I could.

I really don't remember when it dawned upon me that this was not the Rubin I knew but his Bolshevik brother, who had gone to prison for his convictions. I only remember that all the time while he was drinking I wanted to ask him whether he'd fallen under a horse, as had happened to me.

"Your overcoat's torn. Come to our place, Mother will mend it, she's a dressmaker."

"I haven't the time, young lady."

He was going to pat me on the head but, looking at his dirty, stained hands, he thought better of it.

"How old are you?"

"Eleven."

"You don't know how lucky you are, young lady. Your life will be good."

"Why do you think so?" I asked.

"I don't think. I know."

Staggering from weariness he moved on and I stood for a long time looking after him until at last he turned the corner and was hidden from my sight.

Next day Mother and I learned where he had come from and why his hands were black. A Siberian Cossack regiment, which had been summoned to Petrograd by the Provisional Government, was to have passed through Lopakhin Station, but workers from the tannery, led by Rubin, had torn up the track and persuaded the Cossacks to go back.

Neither the war years nor the February revolution had brought many changes to Lopakhin. Now, however, when on various pretexts I went every day from the tenements into the town, the impression which I had was that, from one day to the next, there elapsed not hours but years.

The changes were vast, extraordinary, and they affected absolutely everyone—that was what struck me particularly.

There were soldiers in the garden in front of the district council, where the Soviet of Deputies was now housed, and they were distributing leaflets. I myself saw the Head of the *gymnasium* take one of these leaflets and at once fling it to the ground in indignation. On fences and the walls of houses there appeared an appeal, signed by the Military Revolutionary Committee, and it would be hard to convey what a storm this little scrap of paper aroused in Lopakhin! I was at the Lvovs' when one of Andrei's classmates, a boy named Von der Boll, son of the district Marshal of the Nobility, came to see him. At first they talked about school affairs: was it true that Latin had already been abolished in Petrograd? Then Von der Boll began to abuse the Military

Revolutionary Committee. Andrei replied calmly, only once asking through clenched teeth:

"You don't understand it? Then your brain must be different from other people's."

Von der Boll did not stop, however, and then Andrei went up so close to him that their brows almost touched and said, in a level voice:

"One word more and I'll arrest you."

The day before it would have seemed merely comical for one fifth-form schoolboy to talk of arresting another. But today... today Von der Boll went pale and left hurriedly.

I had barely turned eleven when the Great October Revolution took place and could not, of course, appreciate the deeper meaning of what it brought into my life. But I retained for ever a distinct sense of something extraordinary which went on happening every day, as though time itself had moved forward rapidly, sweeping aside habitual, settled notions.

* * *

For whom were these startling events happening? For whom did they hold a meeting at Valuyev's rag factory at which a representative of the Soviet of Workers', Peasants' and Soldiers' Deputies promised that those who had been living in the tenements would be given apartments in the town, while the bourgeoisie would be transferred to the tenements? For whom was Madame Krzhevskaya's secondary school merged with the town school, boys and girls studying together, while in the entrance where once I had seen Madame Krzhevskaya herself, stout, majestic, wearing a sable cape with tails, appeared a sign: "First Unified Labour School"?

In furious argument with some distant relation of the Lvovs who suddenly turned up at the "depot" in the winter of 1918 Pavel Petrovich, vigorously knocking on the floor with both his sticks, said:

"You ask for whom this is being done, my dear Alexander Khristoforovich?"

And, answering his own question, he pointed at me.

For me and for those like me: that's for whom these amazing changes were being made. For me, so that I shouldn't have to go to Valuyev's any more and sort dirty rags, so that I might have lessons and receive marks.

I was filled with pride, and it was not surprising that I began to walk along the street with my head held high, as befitted a girl on whose behalf such wonderful changes were being made in the world.

Day followed day and month followed month. One winter evening a cab stopped before the former "depot." Mother and I were in the sleigh. Agnia Petrovna had begged Mother to go into the countryside in order to barter various articles for flour and groats. We sat among our bundles and were silent. It was very cold. The driver, with snow dropping off him in big lumps, got down from his box and cried:

"Anybody at home?"

Andrei, merry and pleased to see us, came out on to the steps and said:

"Hullo! How are you?"

And there stood the house in which everything happened so unexpectedly and in a way that was impossible to foretell, the house where I had learnt so many new things: it had become a quite ordinary house. I walked through the "depot" with an unfamiliar sensation of complete equality between Mother, Agasha and Agnia Petrovna, between Andrei and myself. The sense of unfamiliarity quickly passed away, however, and it began to seem to me that things had always been like that.

The winter passed and we were given a fine room in Malaya Mikhailovskaya Street, in the flat of the former Procurator of the Court, who had fled abroad during the Civil War. Now it was no longer necessary to talk in whispers, and on the other side of the wall there weren't any wretched people, talking in whispers, such as we had been. Our neighbours now were, on the right, a thin little woman named Maria Petrovna and, on the left, a tall, stout one, Nadezhda Petrovna. They worked together with Mother in the sewing workshop of the Central Workers' Co-operative.

Our new room was spacious and bright and, as I awoke in the morning, it struck me that formerly Mother and I had been somehow hidden away but now we had come out into the open and, after the darkness, it was as though our eyes hurt, the morning sun shone so brightly through all three windows. Our furniture was new, too: two soft armchairs, a white cupboard and a sofa covered with moquette. From the tenements we had brought only our chest-of-drawers, Mother's bed and the poster announcing the play *Poverty Is No Crime*, in which one of the performers was P. N. Vlasenkov, of whom, by the way, Mother and I had had no news for six years.

Meanwhile time passed and from behind the fading outlines of the old world there appeared ever more distinctly that new one, as yet unfamiliar to us, which nowadays enters naturally into the life of every Soviet person. An announcement appeared in *Krasny Nabat* about employees being engaged for the House of Culture, and Agnia Petrovna went to work there as an expert on acting and music. The Political Education Department set up a publishing house and amongst its first publications was a brochure by Pavel Petrovich entitled *World Outlook and Medicine*—thin, in a pink cover, with a foreword to the reader in which the author explained why he had not quoted sources or "regaled the reader with the wisdom of the encyclopaedic dictionaries." "Time is short," he wrote, "and I want to say so much." In passing, he mentioned a large work, devoted to the study of the health-giving powers of the organism. On the back of the cover, under the price, he gave his address. Letters suddenly began to be sent to that address from Moscow and from Petrograd, from Tver, Penza and Nizhny Novgorod. Students and workers, professors and medical men wrote to the old doctor—some agreeing with him and others disagreeing.

At last the old doctor had his day of triumph. The postman brought a letter from the famous R. Pavel Petrovich was horrified at my ignorance when I asked what this man was famous for, and talked to me for an entire week about the services rendered by R. to Russian and world science.

What did the great scientist write to Pavel Petrovich? Who knows? It must have been something out of the ordinary, because after he received that letter the "work" was put aside and the old doctor, looking twenty years younger, sat down to write a short article in which, as he explained to Andrei and me, he would set forth only the bare essence of his theory.

* * *

An early April morning in 1920. The mist over the Tesma is dispersing, the stars are paling, with every minute that passes the red strip of dawn flames brighter and the sun's rays, darting suddenly through the clouds, in a moment arrange in their own way everything that cannot be taken in at a glance. The cramped little town becomes more spacious, the houses seem to take on better proportions and grow taller.

Andrei, carrying a newspaper in his hand, came into the Red Corner at our school, which the children were decorating for May Day.

"Your attention, comrades!"

It was a copy of *Pravda* and Andrei had brought it to school because in it there were printed the farewell letters of nine Komsomol members who had been shot by the Whites in Odessa.

Pale with emotion, pausing frequently to take breath, he read the letters:

"Dear ones and kinsfolk, I am departing from life with the knowledge that I have done my duty to the Revolution. — Ida Krasnoshchekina."

"Dear comrades, only a few hours of life remain. We are going boldly to meet our death, knowing that comrades remain free who will carry on working for the glory of our great cause.—Yakov Bezbozhny."

"I am not going to die without a struggle, but if nevertheless death comes to me I shall meet it with head held high.—Vasily Petrenko."

I have kept that issue of *Pravda*, 25th April, 1920, to this day—still full of echoes of the Civil War, half-forgotten and yet immortal. Sometimes I unfold it and from its time-yellowed pages there arise before me that spring morning, the trembling young leaves of the birch-tree outside the window, the joyous chirping of the birds in the school orchard, the red cloth hanging to the floor, with the inscription: "Long live the First of May!" which we didn't have time to fasten across the complete width of the wall, and the half-childish faces of the boys and girls as, moved, they listened to Andrei.

## THE LVOVS HAVE VISITORS

It was the evening when I remembered that I had not been to see the old doctor for a long time and, after having called on Mother at her work on my way from school, decided not to go home but to visit the Lvovs. I walked along Karl Marx Street thinking about myself in the third person, and I didn't merely think but in a sort of way wrote in my mind: "She's seventeen; is she really seventeen already?" That sounded funny. "Who knows what lies ahead? Another two years—no, a year and a half—and she will finish school and go to Moscow."

When I whispered the name "Moscow," for some reason there appeared in my mind the idea of a joyful dwelling, full of song, and, like one of the ships moving onward by night on the Tesma, all lit up. I would see Moscow. I would be a doctor. Pavel Petrovich told me that the very best forces of the medical world were gathered in Moscow.

I ran across Vechevaya Square, turned up Ivanovskaya Street—and stood stock-still: all the windows in the Lvovs' place were lit up, shadows were flickering across them, and snow swirled in the shafts of light which fell from the windows into the yard, just as in front of the house I had been imagining.

I climbed on to the dustbin and pressed my face to the window. Inside I saw the old doctor sitting hunched up at the table. Agnia Petrovna stood behind him holding a bowl in her hand, with a circular, bluish flame burning in it. I wondered what it could be! The window was covered all over with little crosses and stars and so refracted the light that, suddenly, there flashed before me and then disappeared not one but two old doctors. But then I discovered Andrei, sitting in a way which was somehow all his own, calm and erect. There was somebody else, very tall, standing up; laughing, he started to scoop up the blue, flickering flame with a soup ladle. What did all this mean?

I went round to the back entrance and knocked, and Agasha, who still lived with the Lvovs, opened the door to me just as she used to do.

Mitya had come back, that was what it all meant! He had returned from Rostov-on-Don, where he was still serving with the Red Army, though many doctors had already been demobilized and sent home.

Agasha put on her mysterious face.

"We shall have a drink and then go to the station," she said. "The question has been decided."

"Why?"

"They are having a celebration. Interesting people have come and brought wine with them."

That the visitors had brought wine there could be no doubt, if only because Agasha's eyes grew bigger every minute without any cause. I asked where Mitya was and she said in a private whisper, as though nobody in the world except me must know about it, "There."

Then she took me by the hand and we went into the kitchen, where it was half-dark because there was only a weak charcoal lamp burning. I asked why there was nothing but this lamp here and Agasha explained that Mitya had thought there was not enough light in the dining-room and had taken the lamps from the entrance, the pantry, and the kitchen.

"A divine dream," she said, and went out.

I stood there, full of excitement. Mitya! I wanted to go into the dining-room at once but decided that it wouldn't be proper and that the best thing would be to go home and call the following day.

At that moment a tall man, the same one I had seen through the window, came rushing into the kitchen and shouted, vigorously and angrily, "Agasha!"

The man raised his eyebrows with annoyance, just like Mitya, and breathed noisily. It was Mitya, and even before he noticed me I had time to regret that he had become such a big, simply enormous grown-up.

"Hullo, Mitya."

He took a step towards me and said in surprise, "Is it really little Tanya? But why are you in the kitchen?"

"That is something which I can explain very simply," I said. "I had arranged to call on the doctor but since you've arrived he is, no doubt, too busy to receive me. I wish you good evening, that is all."

That came out too smoothly; but when I was embarrassed I always spoke smoothly.

Mitya burst out laughing. He smelt a little of wine and now he was almost my old Mitya.

"Oh, no!" he said. "Let an old friend, I nearly killed, go away? One who says so sweetly: 'I wish you good evening, that is all'? That wouldn't be in my interests."

He took my hand, but I said firmly, "No, I'm sorry," and withdrew it.

I wasn't giving myself airs but had simply changed my mind because I was wearing an old cotton dress and it would be awkward to go home and change.

* * *

Nevertheless, he dragged me into the dining-room, just when everybody was saying, "Quiet, quiet" because the old doctor had risen to his feet and announced that he wished to say a few words. Mitya muttered, "Oh, Uncle!" but they silenced him and then he presented me to his friends in a comical way, by means of signs. His friends were a tall man in Army uniform, with a big, lazily good-natured face, and a small, dark civilian who, when he saw me, opened wide one eye while closing the other without making a single wrinkle. The first man was a stranger but the second was one of our own Lopakhin people and I remembered him at once—Rubin.

The dining-room was hot and full of smoke. The bluish fire burned in the bowl in the middle of the table. The stooping old doctor was saying something in a strong voice, sounding younger than usual. His head, which he thrust well forward, shook with the feeling with which he made his speech.

"Just as when a violent storm arises and unexpectedly we see the under-sides of the leaves," he said, "so the revolution, tearing away the façades, reveals what goes on inside buildings, and people, accustomed to noticing only façades, involuntarily begin to think that hitherto they had seen far from everything. . . ."

I was just growing accustomed to the fact that Agnia Petrovna, looking younger and wearing evening dress, was proudly dominating the table; that Andrei, suddenly looking small beside his tall brother, was gazing at him with an adoration which he tried in vain to conceal; growing accustomed, in short, to everything that had fallen straight from heaven into the "depot" that evening, when Mitya sat down beside me and asked in a throbbing voice:

"Did you know that Glashenka Rybakova is back in Lopakhin?"

That was unexpected and I didn't reply immediately, all the more because, in the kitchen, he had spoken to me in the formal way in which grown-ups are addressed and I had liked it, but now he had suddenly changed to the familiar form. Besides, he asked as though Glashenka had just come back that evening, whereas she had been living in Lopakhin for more than a year. She had come back quite changed: timid, in an unattractive coat made of check shawls, and whenever I met her I always thought she was trying to walk nearer the fence, so as to take up less room in the street and, generally, in the world.

"A long time ago," I said.

"Do you know where she lives?"

"Yes."

"Will you take me to her?"

"Certainly," I replied politely.

Yet for some reason I was terribly unwilling to take him and all the time that Pavel Petrovich was making his speech I was thinking that it was a pity I had agreed.

After all, what business was it of mine that Glashenka had promised to marry Mitya and then run off with another man?

When it had happened, Andrei and I had decided that she had done an awfully low-down thing, especially because Mitya loved her and was in despair when she ran away. Andrei said that it was "oath-breaking," an offence for which, in Peter I's time, her right hand would have been chopped off. But might not there have been reasons for her refusing Mitya?

I wasn't eleven any more and I knew that love is a complex feeling. All the same, it was a pity that he hadn't more dignity and that he ran after Glashenka the very first day he came back.

The doctor was concluding his speech. It appeared that in the persons of Mitya and Kurochkin (that was the name of the tall officer), he was greeting the younger generation of doctors to whom it was his good fortune to be handing on his long experience.

"And so, the road for advancing scientific knowledge lies open, the road of which in former times we could only dream.

What can I contribute today to serve the common cause? The labours of an old man. But this work attempts to throw light on a whole field of the unknown and into this field inevitably our new, young forces will make their way."

Everybody began to applaud and Mitya and Kurochkin lifted Pavel Petrovich up and were going to carry him round the room; but Agnia Petrovna wouldn't allow it and said that, altogether, that was enough for today.

They were all talking about the *gymnasium* when, having seen Pavel Petrovich back to his room, I returned to the dining-room and Rubin, who had removed his jacket (revealing that a compact little holster with a revolver in it hung from his belt), was saying that a good thing about the *gymnasium* was its discipline.

"And does 'Wisdom' still hang in the recreation room?" he asked.

*"... Able in peace and warfare to dispose*
*Of means to launch her spear against her foes*
*And save her people from impending woes."*

He explained that "Wisdom" was a picture of the goddess Minerva striking down a dragon with her spear, and that under the picture were written the lines which he had recited. I kept my eyes on Rubin and I thought that he had altered remarkably. This only flashed through my mind, however, amongst many other reflections, the most important of which was: "I don't want to take Mitya to Glashenka. Why should I take him? He ought to ask Andrei. I'm not going, and that's that."

But by that time it was impossible to take my promise back.

Without saying anything, Mitya glanced at me and left the room. He looked at me so commandingly and yet at the same time pleadingly, as though it were the most important thing in the world for him to run as fast as he could to see

Glashenka, who had perhaps long since forgotten him. I whispered to Agasha that I'd soon be back and went out, too. Andrei shot a questioning glance at me.

## MEETING

The wind had fallen. A bright moon hung high in the frosty sky. Mitya talked ceaselessly. I kept silent, sulking. Sometimes, however, I found him amusing, because he would pass from clumsy joking as though I were a little girl (and then it became obvious that he didn't know how to treat children in general) to a somewhat grown-up tone—especially, when I answered him coldly.

He walked fast, his greatcoat flying open, the big earpieces of his cloth-covered helmet folded back, and didn't notice at all that I could scarcely keep up with him.

"Where is she working?" he asked suddenly. "Oh, yes, you told me. At the school for adults. And the old people?"

"You mean her parents? They fled."

"What do you mean, fled? They went away?"

"Yes, they went away."

"Where to?"

"I don't know; to the Far East, I believe."

People in Lopakhin said that Glashenka's parents had fled to the Whites, but I was not going to retail that sort of gossip to Mitya, as it might be untrue.

It was really strange that I should know all about Glashenka Rybakova; one might have thought that I was interested in her life. But I gave out that it did not concern me at all, and deliberately said something about provincial scandal-mongering.

Glashenka lived in the end house in Razvyazhskaya Street, beyond which began the Field of the Fallen for the Revolution (formerly called Archers' Field) where there was a monument to the men and women of Lopakhin who had given their lives in the Civil War. The field was covered with bluish snow. Some old man in warm clothes was making his way slowly across it, walking on the new snow; the paths had been lost in the recent snow-falls.

"Tanya, dear, it would be better if you went first. I'll wait for you, eh?"

It was so light that I could see a nerve quivering in his cheek, just as with Agnia Petrovna when she was agitated. I was agitated, too.

"Mitya, you seem to think that she and I know each other well. Actually, I'm not even sure that we'll so much as recognize each other."

I had intended to say that Glashenka hardly knew me, but that seemed to be slighting myself and so I turned it in such a way as to imply that I, too, might not know her.

"Tonyechka!"

"Excuse me, Mitya, but it's time for me to be back home."

"Stay just five minutes more! The windows are dark, perhaps she isn't at home."

It was as though his life's happiness lay in my hands, so warmly did he press me to stay. Why did he need me? It was beyond me. If he needed me so much he might, surely, have remembered what my name was and not called me "Tonyechka." At last I agreed to stay for five minutes, not a second more, and he was off in an instant, rushing tempestuously into the courtyard of the house.

We were always early to bed in Lopakhin, and in those years especially early, and Glashenka's housekeeper must have been in her second sleep when Mitya ran up the creaking stairs, crashed deafeningly into something in the passage—probably some buckets—and then knocked on the door so quietly as hardly to be heard.

Evidently somebody asked him, "Who's there?" for he replied, "Pardon me, can I see Glafira Sergeyevna?"

Then the person asked, "Who are you?" or something like that, for he answered, "An old acquaintance of hers."

A little yellow light flared up and went out behind the dim, frost-covered glass. Then, it flared up again; a candle had been lit. I became excited. Was Glashenka at home? But what business was it of mine?

Glashenka was not at home and Mitya was at last told this: the door was not opened although the candle moved to and fro, the housekeeper evidently hesitating whether or not to let a stranger in. Mitya noisily bounded from the porch, slammed the gate and said to me sombrely, "Let's go."

Even before that I had observed that the old man who had recently been walking across the field was not an old man at all but a woman and that this woman was now heading straight towards me, or towards the house by which I was standing by myself. Afterwards I forgot this, but now I recalled it because Mitya, having rushed out of the gate, suddenly stopped and stared at this woman who was still some distance away from us. I don't know which of us first guessed that it was Glashenka; probably it was I, because I at once looked at Mitya and he was still wearing a gloomy look with his brows contracted in displeasure, still angry because he hadn't found Glashenka at home. But then he, too, recognized her! Oh, heavens! He took one step forward and then stood stock-still. I thought I could hear his heart beating. He stood there with his greatcoat flung open, impetuous, pale, suddenly confused, suddenly grown thinner.

But, Glashenka! She didn't know who was waiting for her with such eagerness. She was walking along slowly, thinking, no doubt, about something quite ordinary. When she noticed us she walked still slower; probably the sight of strangers standing near her house had alarmed her.

She came walking towards us and we stood waiting for her for such a long time that I began to feel as though not only we but the whole town, lying there hidden under the snow in which her footsteps fell soundlessly, was awaiting her and wondering what would happen when they met.

"Glashenka!"

She stopped, recoiled, and her first movement, her first impulse was to run away. But she still didn't believe it and apparently this alone caused her to stay rooted to the spot where she stood.

"Glashenka, don't you know me?"

"Mitya!" she exclaimed in a full, strong voice and flung herself towards him with such anguish, stretched out her hand so tremblingly, that I myself, so as not to burst into tears, shut my eyes firmly. Did I only imagine that she was about to go down on her knees to him? I don't know. Mitya lifted her up into his arms.

Oh, how I ran! Headlong. My heart beat hard against my side, and I had to pause a little at the corner of Karl Liebknecht and Razvyazhskaya streets. The town was deserted, empty and bright under the moon. The low houses stood under thick roofs of snow, and all was as if nothing had happened. People were sleeping in their houses, ignorant of how mysterious, how extraordinary love was! Never, never would I love anybody! I flew along Karl Liebknecht Street, then across Vechevaya Square, and over Olginsky Bridge. A sentry in a sheepskin coat gave me a surprised look. Listen, all you people, men and women, who have learnt that there is such a thing as love in the world, both you who have believed in it and you who have not, and you who on this night, at this hour, do not know what to do with your hearts: never, never, shall I love anybody! Listen, those of you who, at the age of seventeen, walk through the town by night and see the moonlight magically transforming the world: I shall never loose my heart!

I walked very fast, talking to myself, bitterly repenting that the day before I had flirted with Volodya Lukashevich from Form Ten and swearing that this would never happen again. Only as I was crossing the Olginsky Bridge did I remember that very soon it would be two years since we had moved from the tenements into the town. That struck me as funny; to become so forgetful because of mere love!

Very slowly I said aloud, "Love is an insignificant episode in the history of organic life on earth."

And I ran back home.

Something had been changed by Mitya's coming—as it had always changed in former, far-off times. Now, however, it was a different transformation—undoubtedly because he himself had become quite different. Now he was a grown man, an Army doctor, who had come back to his home town in a fine leather uniform which the divisional commander had given him for courageously rescuing wounded men under heavy fire. Now it was as if the whirlwind of which the old doctor had spoken had again come to Lopakhin and was flying through its quiet streets in a long cavalry greatcoat.

Mitya had not arrived alone but with Rubin, who had served in the Revolutionary Military Council of the First Mounted Army and had now been appointed manager of the Lopakhin tannery, and Kurochkin, who, Andrei told me, was a doctor who had taken command of a regiment and participated in the attack on Perekop. For some reason, the words Revolutionary Military Council, Perekop, conjured up in my mind a picture of a narrow mountain pass. Their spurs and weapons faintly jingling, silent horsemen rode along this path, exchanging unhurried remarks—and with never a word about the criss-crossing, black, death-threatening shadows which lay on the path.

Of course, it may have been just simple coincidence, but never before in our school had there been so many fundamental arguments, discussions, sudden quarrels, in short, so much of everything that breaks the even course of life, as in those days which followed Mitya's return. We persuaded him to give a talk at the Club of the Old and the Young Guard about the New Economic Policy, and he explained splendidly what it was and why it was necessary at that juncture. True, Mitya boasted a little sometimes, recalling without any reason his participation in the Civil War but his stories were very interesting and everybody listened with delight, especially myself.

After his talk we discussed how a new activist should conduct himself in the conditions of N.E.P. We regarded ourselves as new activists, in so far as our central journal *The Young Proletarian* had declared that the old activist was becoming an historical personage, belonging to the times of the Civil War.

We—that meant Andrei, Gury Popov, Volodya Lukashevich, Nina Bashmakova, and I.

Have you seen those group portraits in which the artist strives to depict people who have been brought together by a common occupation or a common aim for which they are all working? That is the kind of portrait of our group I see in my mind with surprising clarity, and not only the figures and faces, with their diverse expressions of youthful thought and of young, sincere feeling, but also the background: the high bank of the Pustynka, from which our River Tesma could distantly be seen, lit up by the first rays of the sun, which a moment earlier had been shooting high up in the air but now bore down straight upon us. That night ramble and the early morning along the Pustynka has stayed in my memory for ever. But I am anticipating.

Andrei was the leader of our group, since in those days we were most of all interested in "knowing the nature of things." He was the first to explain to us that at the basis of all questions must lie a revolutionary outlook on the world, based on the results achieved by science, and he was the first of our group to join the Komsomol. We knew our "basic political education" by heart, especially Nina, but he said that that was only the beginning, that we must know Lenin's *The State and Revolution,* and I remember that we devoted a whole year to the study of that book, drawing up a long list of unfamiliar words. He gave a talk at school about "The Origin of Life on Earth," explaining why the materialists were right on this question.

But had Andrei changed in the depths of his heart? Yes, perhaps he had. He had become livelier, more active. As of old, however, he did not look but peered, as though his grave grey eyes saw something quite different from what we could see. As before, he talked about Mitya a great deal, esteeming him no less than he used to and, as before, behind his detached manner one felt that he did not merely love his brother but worshipped him. In short, he was the old Andrei, only that he had now become a thickset, sturdily-built young man, clumsy but strong. Mixed with his strength in a quaint way there was a sweetness of nature which he somehow tried to hide and was annoyed when he let it show.

The revolutionary world outlook in theory and practice was what excited us most of all. Did it accord with this world outlook that I lived with Mother, who managed the sewing workshop of the Central Workers' Co-operative, and did not earn my own living, though I might have done, since I was over seventeen? In practice, that is to say, in life, I ignored this question. Still, at the bottom of my heart it worried me; incidentally also because it had something in common with the question of how an activist should behave under the conditions of the New Economic Policy.

Nina Bashmakova on the other hand—she was my best friend—was never worried by such problems. She considered that N.E.P. was even useful for our world outlook, since it was a test, and possibly the easiest of the tests which lay ahead of us. In general Nina was a girl of stronger principles than I. She scolded me for pride, for aloofness, for hidden coquetry (she believed I hid my coquetry) and, above all, for "rose-coloured spectacles," that is to say, for unfounded optimism. Thus, I had many reasons for remorse, whereas she had only one: she was tortured by the thought that she couldn't be sure whether she had a world outlook yet, or not, and whether or not she would be able to recognize the moment after which a person could definitely claim to "have formed an independent view of the world"?

Andrei told her to read *The Riddle of the Universe.* Only I, however, knew that her reading of the book stopped at the words: "And so, coming to the subject. . . ."

Gury Popov: now there was somebody of whom one could say without any irony that he had formed an independent view of the world.

He was quick-tempered and almost as dark as a Negro. No public matter was ever settled in Lopakhin without the participation of this young man. Though he was barely fourteen at the time, he was a member of a S.S.U. (special service unit) when the Whites were approaching Lopakhin.

Along with Andrei he constantly reiterated that cultural work among the masses should not be our only concern and that we should share also in Sunday voluntary work and in practical campaigns, such as, for instance, for the liquidation of illiteracy, for improving the living conditions of young people, and so forth. It was he who organized the Komsomols' Club at the House of Culture at which we often met the Komsomol members from the tannery. They had a big organization at the tannery, incomparably better than ours, and one of their members, Shura Vlasov, was even on the factory administration.

Amongst my diaries and letters of those years I have preserved a page from Gury's pocket note-book. Perhaps this page will describe him better than I can:

"Monday: meeting of youth correspondents, question of a 'living newspaper.'

" 'We know only that we know nothing.' Get clear—isn't this idealism?

"Borrowed three rubles from Bodryagin until 17/VIII.

"Preparation for International Youth Day.

"In verses avoid verbs.

"Observation: The girls cannot stand it when we (a) play chess, (b) discuss philosophical subjects.

"Remember mass ramble out of town, 23/VIII.

" 'Great is the power of steady misrepresentation; but the history of science shows that, fortunately, this power does not long endure.'—Darwin.

"Collection of firewood, 14/IX."

It was interesting that Gury's intense activity did not in the least prevent him from falling hopelessly in love once a month; and then we began to take steps to get him to make a speech somewhere as soon as possible. It was Nina who first noticed that he felt better after making a speech.

* * *

Have you observed that, in every group portrait, there is somebody who stands apart, as though listening to what absorbs the rest? This indistinct figure can be distinguished only with difficulty from the background of the portrait. Such a one was Volodya Lukashevich, about whom Gury once said with impatience that, if he were to be planted in the ground, within a week there would be green shoots and after two more weeks buds would appear on the shoots. This didn't mean at all, though, that Volodya was a vegetable person, such as one does sometimes meet—people with, so to speak, vegetable souls. He really was close to Nature; perhaps because one never felt the slightest strain in him and somehow he was needed by everybody though he himself invariably remained in the shadows. He was a fair, tall youth with an evenly ruddy complexion, always whistling bass parts. In the school orchestra he played the helicon—a very large trumpet.

The section of the journal *The Young Proletarian* which he liked to read most of all was *The Komsomol—the Patron of the Red Navy*. Since childhood Volodya had been determined to become a sailor.

And this was the wonderful group of friends which was always making plans to help me "jump" a form at school so that I might go up to college with them, friends who now declared that they would not have any more to do with me.

This happened when the post of geography teacher at our school fell vacant and Glashenka Rybakova applied for a transfer from the school for adults to ours.

That was before Mitya returned and at that time her desire did not meet with the slightest objection, especially as teachers received a comparatively small ration. We were therefore very surprised when Nina Bashmakova, who shared a flat with the French teacher, came running to me, very excited, and declared that the School Council had decided to reject Glashenka's application. Up to this time nobody in our group had been interested in Glashenka. But to reject her—that wasn't fair! And Gury proposed to speak in her defence in the School Council.

One must do him justice; in his plan of action there was clear evidence of an "independent outlook on the world." First and foremost he proposed that we "prepare credentials." Volodya Lukashevich, Gury and I were representatives of the pupils' committee on the School Council, but up till then nobody had bothered to verify our credentials. Gury spoke his word, however, and Ninochka ran and fetched three sheets of splendid paper for our credentials.

It is very difficult to describe, even in general outline, a meeting of the Council of the Lopakhin Unified Labour School of the Second Category in 1922. It is even more difficult to believe that school affairs seemed to us to be a sort of appendage to all kinds of campaigns, meetings, parties, the work of the Komsomol cell, in short, to all that made up the main content of our life.

Our school was located in the former Krzhevskaya secondary school. The meeting of the Council at which Glashenka Rybakova's fate was decided was held in the porter's lodge, the warmest place in the school, and I remember that there was another item on the agenda before we got to Glashenka: "logs for firewood."

This was an important matter. Barges with timber had been standing at Lopakhin since the autumn and the Town Fuel Office had offered four pounds of grain, a pound of fish and a hundred million money-tokens of the 1921 issue for the unloading of a little over two square metres. The French teacher spoke and affirmed that she, with her weak heart, had not the strength to unload a single gram. Gury spoke in reply and explained that the unloading of firewood was the concern of the entire proletariat and consequently the Unified Labour School had no right to dodge it.

We had a respected, grey-haired "Head," with a large beard, who knew how to explain everything and reconcile everybody. He said that Gury and the French teacher were both right. The school would ask for the money and fish in advance and then, having received the remuneration, would hire people to do the work.

Glashenka's application was debated heatedly. Gury made another speech.

"I consider that an application like this, sent in by Glafira Sergeyevna Rybakova, who knows two languages," he said, "does honour to our school."

I saw that the French teacher was simply boiling; it even seemed to me that steam was rising from her and that I could hear her gurgling and hissing. Gury concluded his remarks. The French teacher took the floor. She thanked Glashenka for the "unprecedented honour." As regards the two languages, she said that she was heartily pleased for Comrade Rybakova's sake, but she did not see any direct connection between knowledge of foreign languages and that of the geography of the homeland. Here she made an unkind allusion to Glashenka, referring to her as "an individual" and although in general this expression has no special meaning, in the given instance it sounded nasty.

I think that it was precisely at that moment that there arose in me that strange condition of spirit which I can't explain at all and which still nowadays sometimes seizes me, though less often with every year that passes: as though time stops and I see everything around me in a new and unexpected light. A girl wearing a while half-coat appeared before me, as though in a dream, her face flushed, delicately fragile, with large eyes. She stood in the Lvovs' courtyard and drew a note out of her mitten. Mitya ran out to her, excited, without his greatcoat. He proudly led her by the hand and she walked with him, smiling, and they were full of that love in the presence of which I caught my breath.

And I remembered another Glashenka: the one who had come to us one winter evening together with the cold and the noisy rattling of the harness of a hurrying *troika*. Hidden in a corner I had gazed at the slim hands clutching the head, the hair falling over the hands, the sad face and the wide-open eyes. "Too late," this face said. "Now gold shines and diamonds sparkle before my eyes."

"The question now is whether or not we shall grant the application made by Glafira Sergeyevna Rybakova?" I heard the voice as in a dream. "Those in favour, raise their hands."

Those in favour were Gury, one of the teachers, and Volodya. The French teacher wore a triumphant expression and all of them stared at me because I hadn't raised my hand. It was awful. My hand hung down and felt very heavy and I really felt that I was going out of my mind because, at one and the same time, I both wanted and didn't want to raise it

Gury gazed at me with a long look of scorn and reproach and in a minute it was all over. Glashenka had lost.

The "Head" who, incidentally, had abstained, announced the result with regret.

"By doubting we arrive at the truth," he said. "The application is rejected."

As we left the school Gury caught up with me. "Just a moment."

I turned round. From nervousness my face began to quiver but I at once pulled myself together and even lifted my head proudly as though it were a matter of profound indifference to me what I was about to hear. If only it had been!

"Look here," said Gury, in a voice cold with fury. "You've done a rotten thing and I don't want to have anything more to do with you."

* * *

It was very strange, but nothing was changed in our room, in spite of the fact that I had committed a mean action, which was, moreover, of a social and not a personal order, as I ought to have warned the others that I was going to vote against. The cat was sleeping soundly in the arm-chair—to her it meant nothing that Gury would have nothing more to do with me. The clock on Maria Petrovna's wall made a hoarse sound, preparing at some length to strike the hour and then not striking, and after that it was quiet; so it had been yesterday, and the day before. When she went out, Mother had left some potatoes and a knife on the table so that I might not be idle but could get on with peeling them (she didn't like potatoes in their jackets). Everything was just as it had been. But what had happened to me? I paced the room and thought and thought....

Let's admit that I didn't like Glashenka. It was not for nothing that when I encountered her in the street I always crossed over to the other side—although she, in any case, didn't recognize me. Even if I hated her, had I in this situation the right to act in accordance with my private feelings? And if I were so to act, ought I not to tell my comrades about my feelings, that is, to bring them before the judgement of society?

Yes, I was a despicable creature and Gury had behaved correctly towards me. But there was still another side to what I had done and, pondering over this, I was surprised to find that I knew myself so little. What did it signify? I was capable, then, of taking a decision and repudiating it within a single hour? Had I a weak character? A transient feeling could cause me to take one direction at the same time that logic was leading me in another? What would happen, if this were so, with other decisions of mine, infinitely more important than this one? For instance, I had decided that I wanted to be a doctor; after a month or two, might I take it into my head that it would be better to seek some different kind of professional training?

The day passed and I had decided nothing. It passed, and even Andrei hadn't looked in to see me; doubtless he had long since heard all about it from Gury or Nina. The day passed and Mother came in to go to bed. She would put out the light and go to sleep and I would be left alone again to think once more—about what? I buried my face in the pillow and cried a little, quietly, so that Mother shouldn't hear.

Where had I read that you can go to sleep by will-power? I tried to create this will-power in my heart. I don't know whether it helped, but I did go off to sleep just as I heard, indistinctly, the grating of a key in a lock and the heavy steps of Nadezhda Petrovna going along the corridor. "How good that this day has ended!" I thought, but I couldn't remember why it was good: I had already forgotten it.

Then suddenly sleep was gone.

My legs tucked under me, I sat on the bed and listened. But everything around me was quiet; I lay down again, and then it was as if somebody, I don't know who, took me by the hand and led me to the cottage where Glashenka lived, in Razvyazhskaya Street. Dark windows reflected the moon. Glashenka walked slowly across the snowy blue of the Field of the Fallen for the Revolution and Mitya and I waited and waited for her. How terrible it was, how shameful, that she wanted to go down on her knees to him! How agonizingly that cry of hers echoed in me, full of anguish and happiness and of another feeling which I didn't understand, from which I wanted to run away, right out of sight, so that nobody in the world should see me at that moment. . . .

* * *

Through the entire night I tossed and turned, read a little, tried to sleep, ate some cold potato, stood for a long time in my chemise by the window gazing out into the night and the nocturnal snow and the nocturnal winter sky. Then came the day, which was a very sad one, for Mother was taken ill.

In the morning she was still trying to be brave. She even thought of remelting some rancid butter and nearly caused a fire by attempting, contrary to the laws of physics, to mix butter with salt water. About midday, however, she sat on the bed looking very pale and told me to run to the sewing workshop to warn them that she wouldn't be coming in that day. I ran off, but first went to see Doctor Belenky, who always attended to Mother, and only then to the workshop.

It was a fine Sunday afternoon, the sun shone so brightly that it hurt to look at the snow and one could already feel the spring in this warm radiance. I walked along feeling very unhappy and thought what a strange heart I had in which no griefs could lodge themselves deeply. They somehow always protruded from my heart and everybody could see their tails and that I wanted to get rid of these griefs as quickly as possible. Mentally I tucked these tails in and put on an impassive face; very opportunely, for at that very moment Lenochka Butakova suddenly appeared round the corner and came skipping towards me.

I was at that time in the second form of the second category school and all the rest of our group were in the third form, but she was still such a child that she played with dolls and read *The Blue Heron*—she told me one day that this was the best book in the world and she did not understand how anybody could write a better one. And here was this Lenochka, whom we looked on as a child, coming towards me with her head held high and not greeting me, going past me as though I didn't exist.

True, I managed to look at her with indifference and even somehow through her—sometimes I could succeed in doing that. But, Oh Lord! What happened to my heart at that moment! It bounded like a little ball and I breathed deeply for a long time until it came to rest.

All was clear to me! Not only Gury, but the whole third form held me in contempt. Soon I should be unable to show myself, not only at school, but in the street as well, if even this little Lenochka Butakova dared to cut me.

In my agitation I flew past Vlasevskaya Street where Doctor Belenky lived, and as I walked back I tried to see from afar whether anybody from third form, or our form, was coming. The doctor had a little son and, when he opened the door to me, I stood for a few moments, as dumb as an idiot, as though this boy of ten, with ink all over him, might show that he, too, despised me. But the little boy only sniffed and said that his Daddy wasn't at home.

I sped along Vlasyevskaya Street; the town library was in this street. Looking at nobody I threaded my way through a crowd of boys and girls queueing up for the cinema. Downcast, worried, I ran into the sewing workshop and told them that Mother was ill, then went out by the back way, so as to find myself not in Karl Liebknecht Street but in the Ovrazhki.

The sun had set, the trees in the Ovrazhki had become ugly, black and bare, and the snow dull, so that it lay without sparkling. I was dull and heavy, too, when I arrived back home and on the stairs overtook Andrei.

He was carrying the latest issue of *The Young Proletarian*, in which there was an interesting article about the exploitation of working youth by private capital, and for not less than half an hour we talked about this article, as though nothing had happened. Then Andrei said cautiously that Gury had spent the entire previous day at his place. They had been arguing.

"What about?" I asked.

"About anthropocentrism."

I did not know then that this was an idealistic theory which holds that man is the centre of the universe, and did not appreciate what anthropocentrism had to do with me. Anyway I said, with irony:

"I see!"

Mother was moaning and groaning behind the screen and Andrei said that he had asked Mitya to come and examine her. I thanked him and said:

"Well, what do you think about this affair?"

"I think," said Andrei seriously, "that Gury is wrong in principle. It would have been another matter if the pupils' committee had agreed on its point of view with the Komsomol cell. You know, I understood why you voted against."

Mother groaned just as I was preparing to tell Andrei that he understood something that I didn't understand myself.

"It was on account of Amerigo Vespucci," said Andrei. "And I think that from that standpoint you were perfectly right."

"Amerigo Vespucci?" I tried with difficulty to assume a significant expression.

"Yes, you were right," Andrei repeated. "A teacher of geography should know such things."

"That's it, precisely," I said.

"But it's still not clear why you didn't warn the crowd beforehand. I explained it this way: you forgot about it, and at the meeting you remembered it. It came back to you, but too late, and then you couldn't go against your conscience."

Eventually I contrived to get the story of Amerigo Vespucci out of him. Apparently somebody in a class at the adult school had asked Glashenka who discovered America and she had said that it was Amerigo Vespucci, but it was Columbus who had shown that it was in fact America and not India. Certainly it was quite laughable that with no more knowledge than this Glashenka should want to teach geography at a school from which people had the right to pass on to an institution of higher education! If I had known of this fact beforehand who could doubt that I would have voted against? Everything was splendidly put right and when I said good-bye to Andrei it seemed to me that there was no girl in the world more honourable and noble than I.

We left the house together because Mother had asked me to go to the chemist's. On my way back I was thinking how much more serious was Andrei's attitude to life, how very much more sincere and earnest than mine. He was honest and inwardly responsible to himself, but I was obviously not or I wouldn't have snatched at that Amerigo at a time when in the depths of my heart....

I didn't succeed on that occasion in looking into the depths of my heart because, as I went into the hall, I heard voices and, in an instant, realized that Glashenka and Mitya were there.

It was odd that he had brought Glashenka with him; only later did it dawn on me that he went absolutely everywhere with her—that was why he came with her to our place. They had only just taken off their coats and said "hullo" to Mother. Both were young, handsome, pink-cheeked as though washed by the snow; it seemed that one couldn't have found a more attractive couple in the whole world.

I don't recall ever having seen Mitya so happy, so talkative, so amiable. One might have thought that he felt an urgent need to win Mother's esteem and even her admiration.

He pretended (and this was particularly nice of him) that he hadn't called in order to examine Mother, but simply as a visitor. Every minute he addressed her by her first name and patronymic and me he called Tanya, never once forgetting. Mother asked him if he would be staying long in Lopakhin and he replied that he had another fortnight and then would be off to Moscow because, while at the front, he had done some work on typhus and he had been offered a job at a research institute. This time he wasn't boasting. Very gaily he related how at some railway station he was taken prisoner but managed not only to escape—that wasn't very difficult—but also to drive the White hospital train over to our side.

"True, I had to have a heart-to-heart talk with the train commander," he said, and turned animatedly to me. "Tanya, do you play chess? This is how it was. He hadn't any time to think out his move. I showed him my revolver and he didn't take long to make up his mind to acknowledge defeat."

This courtesy, this striving to charm, and the gay vigour with which he told of his adventures were not, however, for Mother and me, but for that woman who sat quietly in her chair and, like a doll, turned her big eyes now on Mitya, now on Mother. It was as though there were something flimsy built up in her heart, like a house of cards, and she was trying not to move very much so as not to cause this house to collapse. I looked at Glashenka and felt angry, not with her, but with myself for not being indifferent to what she was like and why she didn't laugh but only smiled faintly in response to Mitya's banter.

Meanwhile Mitya had very skilfully turned the conversation on to medical matters, describing how, when he was dealing with typhus, he fell ill himself and nearly died. Then, when Mother began to complain about her illness he suddenly said, brightly:

"I think I have my stethoscope with me!" And he took it out of the pocket of his coat.

That was when I regretted that Andrei hadn't warned me earlier that Mitya would be coming round to examine Mother. She had often complained of a bad heart, but I was convinced that what she was suffering from was a nervous trouble of emotional origin, about which, of course, I couldn't talk to Mitya in Mother's presence. For example, in 1920, when we had only just moved over to Mikhailovskaya Street and there was nothing in the house except dried vegetables (so that every day I had to place the same number of pieces of carrot, beet and turnip in the stew-pan), Mother suddenly went crazy about films.

At first everything was all right, probably because the films were about life abroad and Mother remained indifferent to those *reines du demi-monde* with whom she had nothing in common. Later on, however, the cinema manager found somewhere in Lopakhin itself a number of Russian films with Mozzhukhin and Vera Kholodnaya in them—and Mother got so carried away that she could neither think nor talk of anything else. Every evening, on returning from the cinema, she would invite Maria Petrovna and Nadezhda Petrovna to come in and, becoming younger and gayer as she did so, would talk with enthusiasm about the latest film. She would re-enact particularly powerful scenes herself and one day nearly threw herself out of the window playing Lisenko in *Don't Go to Her with Questions. . . .*, a notable film.

But then this craze passed and within a few days Mother was so greatly changed that it was hard to recognize her.

This experience had been repeated quite recently, when Mother began suddenly to pine for Petrograd, for the Narva Gate and, in general, for the years when she worked at Madame Brizac's for eight and a half rubles a month. I started to argue that this showed political immaturity on her part, but she answered, "Ah, Tanyechka, you don't understand. I was young then!"

Sad and weary, she wandered round her room complaining about her heart. Some doctor had told her to apply a pancake made of white clay to her heart and this she did every day, but her heart didn't get any better.

I had to tell Mitya that! But it was already too late, for he was saying cheerfully:

"And now I'll examine Natalya Tikhonovna, so we'll ask these girls to disappear like smoke."

He glanced affectionately at Glashenka and added in an apologetic voice:

"For ten minutes."

* * *

Ten minutes! When I was still in the hall and had heard Glashenka's voice I had resolved that I would ask her pardon and tell her the whole story even if I were to die in doing so. But I didn't know that I should be stopped short every minute by a fluttering of the heart—a fluttering and an incomprehensible feeling which made me hate Glashenka—Glashenka, who was guilty of nothing.

In brief, at that moment when we went out into the hall and Glashenka, glancing back carelessly, sat down on the trunk, I felt that it would be easier to swallow my tongue than to utter a single word.

"Glafira Sergeyevna," I mumbled in a strained voice, after a silence, "I wanted to say that it was I who did for you on the School Council. I voted against you and so the motion was lost by one vote."

It would have been easier for me if she had expressed amazement, if she had even asked me: Why? But she said nothing, only a weary, sinister light flickered in her eyes and disappeared.

"Perhaps it was a shabby thing to do," I went on desperately, "but they'd told me that at the adult school you were asked who discovered America and you answered—Amerigo Vespucci."

Glashenka laughed.

"And it's true, I did make some such muddle," she said, "but that was a long time ago, last year. Was my application discussed on the School Council?"

Good Lord! She didn't know anything about it! I had admitted to my own conscience that my best friends were right in regarding me as a contemptible person. I hadn't been able to understand what was wrong with me and at last had decided that that was my greatest trouble. And she, the cause of all this woe, she who had raised this tempest, didn't even know that her application had been discussed on the School Council. It was simply absurd. I would have had a hearty laugh over it if I hadn't wanted to cry.

"That's good," I said calmly. "And there were we worrying over it. Does that mean that all this is of no importance to you?"

Glashenka threw up her hands, blinked her eyes and stretched herself.

"The week after next we're leaving for Moscow," she said. "Oh, I simply can't find the words to describe how glad I am! I'm so fed up with this hateful Lopakhin; one can't turn one's back here, there's scandal-mongering at every step...."

* * *

I walked a little way with Glashenka and Mitya and talked to them about Mother's emotions. Mitya said that there was no harm in it; let her be carried away by her emotions, her heart nevertheless was very bad. It was not clear what caused the attacks such as she had had that day; possibly they were caused by high blood pressure. She must go to hospital and, first of all, have her blood pressure recorded.

I went back and started to frighten Mother. But she retorted that there was really nothing wrong with her, she had never had any blood pressure and, when Maria Petrovna came, she would ask her to apply cupping glasses.

## MY DEBUT

An article appeared in *The Young Proletarian* under the title: "A Komsomol member has no right to eat a piece of bread without giving part of it to the famine-stricken." We discussed this article and Gury proposed that we put on a play for the benefit of the Famine Relief Fund. Until then we had only held collections, which had not brought in much.

There was no theatre in Lopakhin and in the old days actors used to perform in the former club in the Nobles' Assembly Rooms, where the House of Culture now was. But in 1920 the steamboat-theatre *Red Volga* paid a call on us. The Tesma was rather shallow for this vessel and so we had to walk a long way along a gangplank laid over the water, and I've retained the memory of this quivering, sagging gangplank which led—it was difficult to believe it—to a real Moscow theatre.

The play, Schiller's *Kabale und Liebe*, was put on in a strange way. There was no curtain. The floor was covered with good cloth, almost new, and I thought it a shame that people should walk on it.... But never mind! I gazed at the stage in a sort of trance. Nina kept nudging me, while Gury went into whispered raptures, declaring that such a production could not be seen even in Moscow, and I sat motionless and numb....

The stevedores (most of the audience were stevedores) got excited, starting to make a noise and stamp their feet, when the President ordered the arrest of Louise. Only then did I recover from this enchanted sleep.

Of course we couldn't hope to put on a production like that, with complicated properties and subtle psychological acting. The dramatic circle which Nina and I had organized at school could never make a success of anything for a number of reasons, the most important of which, in my opinion, was that everybody wanted to play the chief part. But this time we promised to obey Gury as producer unquestioningly—that was the way out of this situation, if not for us, then for him, as he proposed to produce a play he had written.

The chief part in the play was to be taken by me and it had seemed to me that this circumstance, insignificant at first glance, was not without its bearing upon the severe way in which my behaviour on the School Council had been regarded. However, when it became known in the town that Glashenka was going to Moscow with Mitya our dispute became rather pointless, though in general, it was even interesting to sort out relationships and ostracize one another.

I have mentioned that Gury was to produce the play. Actually, it wasn't a play at all, but a film scenario, and that was where the main originality of his proposal lay.

We had to act in silence, as in the films of that time, that is, with a musical background, and a "narrator" would meanwhile explain to the audience what was happening on the stage. The part of the narrator was played, of course, by Gury. This was the biggest part of all, because there was a lot to explain: important military and political events were taking place on the stage and it was very difficult to depict them in mime alone.

But my part was an interesting one, too: the heroic woman, Anna, who stays behind in a city captured by the Whites and obtains their secret plans, appearing now at the General Staff Headquarters, now at a clandestine telegraphic transmitter.

Of course, we couldn't run to trumpets and other props; besides, a great deal of what was supposed to happen in the scenario was to be effected with the aid of some theatrical machinery or other of which even the author had no clear idea. This didn't matter much though, as Gury said that Shakespeare himself, when he had no money for scenery, used to come on the stage and announce, "A wood," if it was necessary for the audience to imagine one, or "A storm," if a storm occurred in the course of the play.

I spent all April studying my lovely part. At that time I didn't yet have the book *Great Actors and Actresses* and had to guess what gestures to use to express pride, combativeness, hope, danger and so forth. Every morning, without uttering a word, I "rehearsed my face," that is I practised various expressions suitable to this or that section of my part. This, in Gury's opinion, was the best way to give my face artistic mobility. Whether it did, in fact, I don't know, but whenever I was at it Mother looked at me and said, "The saints preserve us!"

On the eve of the first night, Gury declared that it was necessary "to give up everything else and withdraw into oneself in order to concentrate on inwardly verifying one's readiness to play the part." This was not easy for some of the actors: Nina, for instance, who couldn't be sure whether she had withdrawn into herself or not.

For me, however, it was easy. Pale and thinner, I wandered through the town, becoming now cold, now hot, now somehow triumphant—especially when I imagined myself as Anna, lying almost lifeless on a hillock amid the smoke of the scorched earth while, in the background, rejoicing soldiers marched past in their parade uniforms. Anna dies in the performance of her duty. Before her death she addresses the enemy in the following words: "Scoundrels! In vain are you lifting your hands to heaven for it has rejected you. You first threw down the challenge to us! But know that when you massacred innocent people, I was amongst them."

Alas, it was only in my imagination that Anna pronounced her fervent speech. In the actual course of the play she had to lie silent on the hillock while the narrator explained to the audience (in the broadest of outlines) what she was thinking as she died.

Altogether this was an interesting experiment which succeeded completely in so far as it went down tremendously well with the audience. True, our success was of a somewhat different order from what we had expected, for the play was conceived as a tragedy, yet the audience roared with laughter nearly all the time. We couldn't blame them, for the author deliberately misrepresented reality. For example, the narrator ought not to have been given the lines: "The young woman whose face we know is astride a horse," when the young woman in question (it was I) was on foot. Naturally the public began to shout, "Where's the horse?" and so on. Afterwards Gury reproached the boys and girls for poverty of imagination; but, in my opinion, he was wrong. We weren't living in Shakespeare's time and the narrator's words should have corresponded to a certain extent to what was happening on the stage.

It was still worse about the curtain. We had no curtain. Gury declared that this was a very good thing, because curtains had been out of date for a long time and instead there must be absolute darkness on the stage. Absolute darkness was not achieved, however, and each time the light went out the audience could see boys and girls from the junior forms sitting on the floor in the wings and shouting, now loudly, now softly, so as to give the impression that they were either advancing or retreating.

All these things were trifles, however. The main thing was that we were acting on a stage for the first time in our lives!

I went on, and the invisible, darkened hall began to watch my every movement. I was no longer I in this new, frightening world of the lighted stage. I trembled all over and it was impossible to touch anything because everything around me was as hot and as quivering as I was.

At last this joy, this torment ended! In the hall they were clapping. Gury, excited and sweaty, found me behind some screens and dragged me out on to the stage. I bowed. Nina had said that it was necessary to bow while remaining in character: I remembered this and bowed again, in the spirit of the heroine whom I had portrayed. The audience laughed and when I came on a second time they were already our familiar schoolmates, amongst whom I began to distinguish individual faces.

## A NIGHT AT THE PUSTYNKA

As always after excitement, my head ached a little and I wanted quiet round me. Something remained in my heart from our play and I felt myself involuntarily nursing this wonderful "something" while I chatted and laughed. In short, when Gury proposed that, instead of dancing,. we should go to the Pustynka (that was what they called the abandoned monastery on the banks of the Tesma), I willingly agreed and persuaded Nina to come as well. A girl who lived near me promised to call on Mother and tell her that I should be back very late.

Why do I recall with such astonishing vividness a night I don't know how to describe? The Ovrazhki were lovelier than ever, with the elms putting forth their first shoots of green, the shadows of young leaves and slender branches falling on the ground, and those dark groves on the banks of the Tesma, under the cliffs, in which it was hard to distinguish the long-familiar ancient willows blending with their own shadows.

The boys were arguing about the play, with Gury talking all the time about "the elements of dramatic art" and defending "new forms which imperiously summon the theatre to abandon its stuffy encasement for the free and open squares." Then they turned to an article of Lunacharsky's* in which he said that it was necessary to admit pupils to the Conservatoire not on the basis of social origin but on that of talent.

"Did you know that Lenin was once at Lopakhin?" Andrei said suddenly.

Everybody exclaimed:

"How? When?" And Andrei told us that Lenin came to Lopakhin from Simbirsk when he was still a *gymnasium* pupil.

"But it's possible that Mitya got it mixed up. Mitya told me this, but in Lenin's biography—I looked through it again on purpose—there isn't a word about it."

I decided, however, that it must be true all the same, and at once pictured Lenin as a *gymnasium* pupil in a uniform with shiny buttons and an open, starched collar, with his prominent forehead and his fair hair combed back. In the garden in front of the *gymnasium* he learns of his elder brother's execution. "We shall not take that road." Then he goes out to the Ovrazhki, pensive, trying not to tread on the slender shadows of the branches....

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* Anatoly Vasilyevich Lunacharsky (1875-1933), a Soviet statesman and public figure, who was prominent in building up socialist culture.—*Ed.*

"Whose are these words?" asked Volodya.

*Serving the Muse allows no vanity;*
*The beautiful must be majestic!*

"There's a poser for you! Pushkin," answered Andrei.

And the boys started arguing about what was meant by "beautiful," and whether or not a genius knows that he is creating something beautiful. Gury asserted that he doesn't and that, in Pushkin's opinion, the beautiful, that is, the great, can be accomplished only by someone who is "psychologically alone," that is, who is free from all feelings—good or bad.

He recited:

*...'tis thou that art the judge,*
*And thine the strictest judgement of them all.*
*Art thou content?...*

"A man is never psychologically alone," he said. "After all, the moment he is born his mother appears to him."

"You mean—he appears to his mother."

"I don't see the difference. He grows up, either goes to school or doesn't go to school, goes to college or else doesn't, and performs all those actions which are characteristic of a human being. Yes?"

"We grant that."

"From the first moment of his life he finds himself in conditions which don't admit of isolation. And these conditions don't in any way prevent him from having a share in creating the greatest works of art. Do you agree with me?"

"I do."

"Aha!" cried Gury triumphantly. "Consequently, you think Pushkin was wrong?"

We burst out laughing and Ninochka declared that it was a sin to bother with philosophy on such a night. But Andrei didn't even smile and I felt that this dispute disturbed him profoundly.

"What does 'great' mean?" he objected. "The Egyptian Pharaohs thought that they were doing something great when they erected the Pyramids, but we believe that a thing is great when it is done in the name of the people and for their good. At the root of loneliness lie disappointment, hatred, spite. And to do something great one must love."

He said this as we were standing on the old floating bridge and watching a barge move to one side to make way for a *rasshiva*—that was what we who lived on the Tesma called a cargo sailing vessel. The *rasshiva* had been visible from afar, when we were still walking through the Ovrazhki, and was now drawing near, so that we could make out the people moving about under the great swelling sail, busy doing something.

I thought Andrei's hands, as they lay on the handrail alongside my own, trembled a little. I glanced at him and was astonished. His eyes were half-closed and his face, with lips firmly pressed together, was triumphant and wore an air of deep solemnity. It was hard to believe, but at that moment I realized that the words "to do something great one must love," were still echoing in his heart and that they blended with this wonderful picture of the river by night, with the *rasshiva*, which passed proudly by under its quivering white sail, as though it were cutting the bridge exactly in half. The pilot was standing in the stern, wearing a sheepskin jacket and trying to light a cigarette; he was striking sparks from a flint and the sparks went out one after another.

At last, we reached the Pustynka. It looked different by night: the brooks babbled at the bottom of the ravine, the moonlight was not the same as in the town—it was more mysterious, softer. The Pustynka stood where four ravines met and formerly there had been bridges across them, but these had long since rotted and fallen down and now one had to know the path in order to get to the monastery.

We went down this path into a ravine and it became so dark and so noisy that the boys, who were now arguing about what love is, had almost to shout in order to hear each other. Volodya picked me up and carried me across a brook in his arms as carefully as if I had been made of glass and would have shattered into fragments if he had dropped me.

The bottom of the ravine was a world of its own, noisy and damp-smelling; when we climbed up out of that world, I gasped, so extraordinary did the old monastery seem to me, with its smooth, austere walls, blind windows and high tower, in which bells could be seen.

We entered the courtyard. How deserted and mournful it was! A stone pavement led into the ruined building of the sacristy. A thick crescent of iron hung from a chain in the middle of the yard. Gury struck it with a stick and a muffled, solemn sound echoed and died away.

We roamed over the Pustynka till morning, breaking off branches from bird-cherry trees and singing.

After a time, Andrei disappeared somewhere. I found him on the ruins of the monastery wall, which overhung a precipice from where the Tesma could be seen far off, and we sat still and were silent for a long time....

"Yes, to accomplish something great, and not in general but concretely," he said at last. "For instance, to discover the secret of protein. Wouldn't that be a feat in science?"

"Oh, yes!"

I nearly asked him if one could achieve a feat by devoting one's future to the theatre, but the idea seemed to me frivolous compared with the secret of protein.

"What do you think, would one have to be a genius to solve a problem like that?"

"I think so."

Andrei was silent. Then he spoke again, in a disappointed tone, "You think so?"

Evidently he didn't see himself as a genius.

"Well, but we can strive towards great things," he said suddenly, in a lively way. "Just think how much clearer everything becomes when you find a main aim for your life. You can examine and verify yourself in relation to it. You can keep it to yourself or confide it only to close friends. You know, I am sure that very soon great things will be accomplished almost daily in our country."

"And what about unhappiness?" I asked.

He didn't understand what I meant, so I explained that the fight against egoism is internal, and that there is still an external fight to be waged against misfortune, grief and so forth which are also very often encountered in life.

Andrei pondered and replied that in such cases the will must be mobilized to help, and that will-power and striving towards an aim were two sides of one and the same thing.

The stars began to pale, the first rays of the sun glanced off the tower, over the cupolas, and then fell full upon us. The great red ball began to rise on the far side of the Tesma, over the fields. One pine-tree stood like a flagstaff at the edge of the precipice, twenty paces away from us. Until that moment it had been inconspicuous, wrapped in the night, but now, in the morning sun, it became red and impressive as though it had been transformed by some miracle.

Swifts soared from the belfry straight towards the sun, their little wings flashing as though someone had thrown fragments of glass into the air. Everything round us, in the sky and on the earth, was red and gold from the sun's rays and already it was no longer the previous gloomy groves that stood on the river bank, but silvery willows with the morning breeze turning up the whitish under-sides of the young leaves. How beautiful it all was! How splendid that dawn had come and that I was looking at the sun in the sky and that nobody knew how happy I was and only I was aware that I would be still happier, the happiest person in the world!

* * *

There were, for some reason, a lot of people in our hall although it was very early when I got back home. Some women were talking in loud voices; when they saw me they exclaimed and then were suddenly silent, drawing apart. Maria Petrovna came out of our room, unkempt, wearing her overcoat, with slippers on her bare feet and, pursing her lips, stared at me:

"What happened?"

"Nothing, nothing."

There was somebody in white in our room. I entered and saw that it was Mitya in his doctor's gown. A syringe which had been taken apart lay on the table before him; he was putting it in a box and, when I went in, was for some reason holding the needle up to the lamp to look at it. His face was weary and strained, tensely screwed up, with knitted brows.

"What's happened?"

He hastily threw the needle down, came up to me and took my hands in his. I ran towards Mother. She lay straight and still, with lifeless face. She was just as always, only her eyes were closed and her hands were folded across her breast. . . .

## A FEW DAYS

Mitya left, once again pressing my hand hard. Some women I didn't know glanced into our room and stood talking a long time in the hall. Though I listened to them I didn't hear what they were saying and, I remember, it gave me a shock when Maria Petrovna said that Mother had waited a long time for me and, when she felt easier, kept saying, "Tanya will succeed because she's a natural actress."

A feldsher from the Central Workers' Co-operative had come to attend to Mother; he had applied cupping glasses to her but she didn't feel any better and she had asked Maria Petrovna to fetch Mitya. Mitya had come and stayed all night at our place. Pale and frowning, he sat by her bed and gave her a camphor injection every hour. Towards dawn he had sent Maria Petrovna to the chemist to get some scarce drug and, because they didn't have it, upbraided her so much that even Mother began to laugh. She didn't know that she was dying. But Mitya injected her again and even did something else. Then all of a sudden, he cried out, "The cup!" and opened one of Mother's veins, but no blood came.

Suddenly he had leant over her and called her by name in a loud voice, "Natalya Tikhonovna!" And Maria Petrovna had clearly seen Mother shudder for the last time and her eyes roll up....

Then I was led away from the room, because Mother had to be laid out, and I sat for a long time in Maria Petrovna's room.

Andrei looked in several times, but made himself so inconspicuous that I quite forgot he was there. Later I went back to Mother. She lay there, combed and clean, and the sleeves of the white robe she wore were roughly tacked together with big stitches, so that the threads would have broken if she had raised her arms. Coppers had been put on her eyelids. Those coins on the eyelids and the sewn-together sleeves were things which were never done with living people. She was dead! She was no more! And blossoming bird-cherry branches lay at her feet because she was dead. She had died at the hour, at the moment when we were sitting in the Pustynka, above the precipice, when the stars had begun to fade and the first rays of the sun had glanced across the cupolas and fallen straight down upon us. She had died as we were breaking off bird-cherry branches and singing and the swifts were taking flight from the belfry; perhaps at that very instant when the thought came to me that nobody in the world was happier than I.

Lopakhin's cemetery was situated on Pavskaya Hill, where a pine forest grew. The boys and Nina, without taking me with them, selected a spot on high, open ground. I don't know where they got the flowers from—the only flower gardens were in Petrov—but when we came away the ugly, sandy hillock under which Mother lay was barely visible beneath them.

How cold and vast our room seemed to me. I could hardly bring myself to cross the threshold.

Without thought or feeling I stood at the window, gazing into the street and listening to the pendulum on the other side of the wall, in Maria Petrovna's room, swinging to and fro, indifferently marking the seconds. . . . And Mother had often complained about her heart. How many times I had urged her to go to a doctor. In vain! It had got worse whenever she was unhappy. She had been unhappy in her last days. She had not thought of Vasily Alexeyevich Bystrov for a long time, but suddenly she sat down to write to him at the Putilov Works, and she had got angry with me when I teased her, by saying that this mysterious Vasily Alexeyevich had, no doubt, been in love with her once upon a time. For two weeks we had been talking about how she would take a holiday in the summer and go with me to Petrograd and find Vasily Alexeyevich who now, since the Revolution, must, in Mother's view, have become Chairman of the City Soviet at least. . . .

We had hardly ever been separated—how could it have happened that she had not even said good-bye to me? The clock wheezed, started to strike, but thought better of it, and the pendulum began again—tick, tock—to beat out the seconds. We had hardly ever been separated, that was the trouble! Everything was ordinary, unnoticed, habitual, that was why I hadn't observed and hadn't valued how tenderly Mother loved me. . . .

Andrei arrived as I was chopping some firewood under the stairs (I had to light the stove, clean the floor, do the washing—formerly Mother had done all this), and without saying a word he took the axe from me. He chopped and brought up so many neat little logs that there was nowhere to put them and I had to shove them under the bed. Every time he brought up a bundle we would talk together for a little while, then he would be off again. The first time he said:

"Nasty gossip about this marriage. You know who I'm talking about?"

"About Glafira Sergeyevna and Mitya?"

"Yes. Well, I quite agree with you. She's not really such a complicated person as she seems."

He meditated and then said that he would be very glad if they would go away quickly.

"It's been proved," he observed seriously, "that in the last analysis love is a condition which depends on the rush of blood to the *medulla oblongata.* And it's not at all clear to me why, because this is happening in the organism of my elder brother, the whole house has to be turned upside down."

Andrei was telling me about the "young people" on purpose; obviously he wanted to make me forget about Mother for a bit.

"It's nonsense, by the way, that Glashenka didn't know about the meeting of the School Council where she was turned down," he went on. "She knew all about it. She told Mitya about it, I heard her. . . ."

He looked sideways at me; he must have thought that I would be surprised to hear this. And it was indeed painful and absurd that this stupid story had moved me not so long ago. "Yes, she is complicated and terrifying," I thought about Glashenka. "And I was a miserable little kid when, trembling, I had talked to her in the hall. What a good thing that they are going to go away! I shall forget them for ever."

The second time that Andrei came up he asked if I had thought about our last talk.

"I want to say," he blushed a little, "that things would be easier for you if you would sometimes remember that you agreed with me. Do you remember, I spoke about striving to do something great, and you asked, 'And what about unhappiness?' You know, you agreed that will-power can help in such cases, and that the will and striving towards an aim are very closely connected. Didn't you?"

I nodded.

"Please think about that, without fail," said Andrei gravely. "I will, too, because, I assure you, this is an extraordinarily important question."

* * *

Several times during that night it seemed to me that I was falling but then somebody nudged me and said, "She's dead!" and, trembling, I opened my eyes. Then I imagined that Mother was wandering through a dark, unfamiliar house and came into a room where I was sitting at table, alone. With fear and horror I realized that she couldn't see me. Then I heard her affectionate voice: "Dear, are you asleep?" That was how she used to wake me up in the morning. Then we hurried somewhere in a cab; she was as young as I, with golden rings in her ears and her shawl fluttering and, at the theatre, the actor Maximov, whom she loved, was waiting for her. Radiant and curtseying in the old-fashioned way she presented me, "A friend of mine." Then, her black eyes flashing, Mother was passionately defending someone.... Then she was standing at the window; and out in Mikhailovskaya Street something from ancient history was happening. Horsemen—Polovtsi or Scythians—were talking loudly together, dismounting from their horses....

I woke up. I had slept with my eyes open and that noise, commotion and talking continued as though the horsemen of my dream had come to life and were pitching their camp outside our house. I got up, and couldn't believe my eyes. In the dim light before the dawn I made out a jumble of many horses and carts crowded together. Some thin, hollow-eyed people wearing camel-hair coats and sheepskin jackets sat or lay amidst this confusion, either on the roadway or in the carts. Amongst them some of our own Lopakhin people were moving about, giving orders—the elder Rubin and others. Mitya came round the corner wearing a greatcoat and helmet and saying loudly to the chairman of the town Soviet, "First of all, people must be organized for fumigating their rags, and after that we've got to send them to the baths."

Maria Petrovna came into my room, looking worried; she was wearing only her night-dress and I noticed for the first time how sharp and thin her shoulders were.

"Tanya, are you asleep?" she said. "They've brought some famine victims from the Volga Country."

Every day I had read in the *Krasny Nabat* about the famine-stricken people in the Volga Country. There was a poster up in the former Prinz's chemist's shop showing a dishevelled, grey-haired woman with a distraught look in her eyes, holding a dead child in her arms, and underneath it said: "Remember the Famine-Stricken."

*The Young Proletarian* had addressed an appeal to young people. I had read in the *Blue Magazine* that the famous traveller Nansen "had refuted the slanderous assertions of the bourgeois press that his photographs were faked." He had taken several thousand photographs and one of these was printed in the *Blue Magazine*—it showed an endless white plain across which people were straggling, supporting each other as they staggered along, while on one side lay two dead women, half buried in snow. A Famine Relief Fund shop had been opened in Lopakhin. All the takings from our performance had gone to the Fund, and I remember we had raised nearly a hundred million rubles, which was a large sum for those days. But all that—our play, the Famine Relief shop, the poster—was immeasurably remote from the creaking of these carts, the commotion, all that had suddenly appeared on Malaya Mikhailovskaya Street under the windows of our house.

I dressed and went for a walk through the town. Peasants from the surrounding countryside had brought the famine victims in their carts and, in all the streets, in the Ovrazhki, along the riverside as far as the Pustynka itself, thin, emaciated people sat round little camp-fires over which sooty kettles hung. Many were wearing tall felt hats and had cloth wound round their legs, with bast shoes on their feet. Some sat motionless on the roadway, others walked about, unsteadily, with their coats hanging open. There were very many children, talking together gravely and quietly. Outside the baths there was a notice: "Workers wanted, extra pay offered." Gury sat at a table and was feeling fed-up. Not enough people had come forward; they were afraid of typhus. He told me that the Komsomol members had been mobilized and I was going to rush off to the District Party Committee to find out where they were sending me but at that moment Gury jumped up and cried, "There he is!"

I turned round. Mitya's cavalry greatcoat flashed by and disappeared down a sidestreet.

"What an organizer, eh?"

"Who?"

"Dr. Lvov," said Gury with enthusiasm, and at first I didn't realize that he was talking about Mitya.

Those were days which I have remembered all my life, and not only because that was my first glimpse of real poverty, and it stabbed me to the depths, but also because, for the first time in my life, I felt that I was taking part in a struggle against the misery of many people.

The children were allocated to apartments and Maria Petrovna and I took in a small boy who was still quite tiny and so thin that I couldn't look at his dark little legs without tears coming to my eyes. He lay there looking out of the corners of his eyes, but in the end recovered splendidly—his cheeks became rosy and he filled out.

The town Soviet decided to open ten bath centres; the tannery workers undertook to supply fuel for these centres, and this job, which was a complicated one, because there was no transport available in Lopakhin, was organized by Mitya. He was everywhere; it seemed that his long greatcoat and the helmet with the flapping earpieces were flashing by at every corner.

But a few days passed, and he disappeared somewhere when things were at their hottest. Then he turned up again, shouted at Andrei that the Komsomol members, and our cell in particular, had not actively helped in the work yet, and disappeared once more—this time for a long period. Andrei presented to the District Committee his plan for using the Komsomol Organization to help the victims of famine. The plan was adopted *nem. con.* and it was now that we first undertook a large-scale social task. We arranged the provision of hot meals from field kitchens, dispensing soup and giving out bread. We carried on collections of clothes, not only in the town but also in the surrounding area. We placed in private houses those children who were in need of special care. The District Committee appointed Gury "Chief Disinfection Officer" and the Komsomols, especially Nina and I, fumigated coats and skirts over a stove in the baths, for twenty-four hours a day.

In all, this emergency situation when the entire town was mobilized lasted only a few days.

It was with a strange feeling that I returned to our deserted room. I went in and stood at the doorway amazed, as though I were finding myself in an unfamiliar house. The well-known objects were in their accustomed places. But I saw this room in a different light, and myself, too, standing on the threshold and attentively examining something new—I myself wasn't clear what. However things might be in the room, in my heart nothing was in its old place. And that sorrow which before had been so painfully sharp and so much "my own" that, in spite of myself, I shrank away when anyone, even people who were near to me, paid attention to it, had now receded a little and moved to one side, so that I could look upon it in a detached way.

## THE CINEMA—MIRACLE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

When I entered, Pavel Petrovich was sleeping so peacefully in his arm-chair that it seemed as though his big head, falling forward on his chest, would never again be raised, and his old eyes, with the narrow rim round the iris, would never look at me with their kindly, sad expression any more. I sat down beside him, pondered, listened and, just as when a child I lay in bed at the Lvovs', I began to assemble the sounds of the house—from the kitchen, from the dining-room, from Agnia Petrovna's room. There was Agasha, driving the cat out of the kitchen and noisily banging the door. There were light steps in the corridor, and Mitya's laugh; I imagined that Glashenka had come up to him stealthily from behind and put her hands over his eyes, but he had turned round, she had screamed faintly and run away, and Mitya, with a crash, charged after her.

"Well, Tanya?"

The doctor was awake. "Give me your hand."

He took me by the hand and we were silent for a long time.

"Mitya said that nothing could be done."

"I know, Pavel Petrovich. As it is, he did everything that he could."

We were silent.

"In such cases I used to apply a mustard plaster to the heart. I don't know, nowadays they give different treatment."

He stroked my head and was thoughtful.

"Listen, Tanya. I have a few personal belongings. A gold cigar case with a monogram and some other things. Take them and sell them."

"Thank you, Pavel Petrovich, I don't need anything."

I sat down beside him on the low bench, as I used to do, and cried a little. He didn't try to console me, but only pressed my shoulders firmly.

I stayed at the Lvovs' till late evening. Mitya was leaving and the entire house was busy with his affairs. The tailor had brought him a civilian suit. Mitya shouted that his legs looked bandy in his new trousers and I recalled, in connection with this, how Andrei had said to me one day, "The outward appearance of things is enormously important for Mitya." An instrument-maker arrived with a "microtome"—that's what they call an instrument for making histological sections. The microtome didn't suit Mitya either—the sections would not be cut fine enough, he said. Agnia Petrovna came in from the House of Culture. Somehow she seemed to be confused in spite of her haughty manner, and related to me at length how, after her husband's death, she had been left alone with small children to bring up but did not lose her head, and some piano tuner whose ear was perfect got her work at Julius-Heinrich Zimmermann's. Then abruptly she forgot about me and began to complain that she had not yet heard one intelligent word out of Glashenka.

"She either sits saying nothing like a little fool or 'mummy's' me this and 'mummy's' me that! What sort of a 'mummy' am I to her?"

Chairs were now being moved about in the dining-room; the household was getting ready for supper. Without saying good-bye to them I quietly ran off home.

* * *

When Mother died I went out to work as librarian and curator of the book centre of the District Political Education Department. This was an easy job. My duty was to supply the town's libraries with books. But, in the first place, the town had only one library, and secondly, although the store was full of books, which had been brought there from landowners' country seats, there was almost no demand in the Lopakhin Library for them as they were mostly in foreign languages.

I would not have mentioned this "half-sleep, half-work," as Andrei called my period in the book centre, if I had not, amongst the multitude of books piled in disorder on the floor, come upon a series called: *The Cinema—Miracle of the Twentieth Century.* These were biographies of well-known film actresses who, incidentally, were always described on the posters as "beautiful," e.g., "starring the beautiful Francesca Bertini."

One biography interested me particularly: apparently the film actress Jeanne Nicole had been so clumsy as a child that her dancing teacher couldn't get her to master the simplest of steps. But she promised herself that the time would come when she would be a "star." And so she began to work on her voice, her movements, and the expression of her face. If she felt sad, she tried to adopt a carefree and even happy look. She deliberately hurt herself, at the same time forcing her face to maintain a serene expression. She learnt to control her expression. Thus she obtained complete mastery over herself. The rest of it was uninteresting, for all the film stars' biographies were substantially the same.

Thus, she felt one thing and forced herself to express something quite different! That meant that an actor didn't in the least need to "live" his part, as Gury, for instance, had asserted when we were rehearsing his play. On the contrary! The more deeply he concealed his private feelings, the greater the freedom with which he could depict a character that was quite different from his own. This idea fascinated me.

Wrapped up in Mother's shawl, for the book centre was in a basement and it was on the chilly side even in summer, I read and read. I sat on books and, everywhere, above and around me, there were more books; to read them all a whole life would scarcely be long enough. As I read, I glanced from time to time at the bright square of sunlight which fell on the stairs; it seemed to me dazzling against the gloom of the dark basement, and I had a strange feeling that everything in the world stopped and waited while I turned a page. I turned it, and something shifted in the world, as, gradually making its way out, the square of sunshine at the entrance to the basement changed its place in the course of the day.

Now, after many a summer, it seems strange to me that that cheap series *The Cinema—Miracle of the Twentieth Century* should have carried me away to such an extent that, first of all unconsciously and then with growing awareness, I began to think about the theatre. Perhaps the idea had entered my head considerably earlier—that day when, playing the heroine Anna, I had gone out on to the stage and the hidden, darkened audience had begun to follow every movement that I made? Anyway, this wonderful idea appeared and with every passing day took command of my heart with greater confidence. At first it didn't seem to clash with my long-cherished decision to study medicine, a decision which I had talked over for so long with Pavel Petrovich and which had gradually become as much a part of my everyday life as Pavel Petrovich himself. Then I thought that it might be possible to study at two higher-education institutes at the same time, a medical one and a dramatic one: that was a way out of the dilemma! Suspect for its very facility of course, but still, a way out!

I pictured the "Modern" Cinema. It's very cold, the girls take off their shoes and sit, now on the right foot, now on the left. The lecturer, wearing felt boots, appears in front of the screen. "In the leading role," he says, "you will see a young actress who wishes to remain anonymous."

And now the lights go out, the projector begins to crackle behind the backs of the audience, vapour from their breath becomes visible in the widening beam of light which descends from the aperture of the projection room. . . . It is she!

And the young actress, dressed very modestly, is sitting in the back row and is laughing and crying with happiness. . . .

At the end of June, having received their school-leaving certificates, Nina and the boys came "to take me away from my work," as Andrei said. I don't know what it was that had changed in them, but between us there already somehow lay as a barrier that new, student life about which they talked so merrily, while I thought sadly that another month would pass and I should be left alone.

Nina was going to the Conservatoire. The problem of her world outlook was now worrying her less because she had drawn from Lunacharsky's article the surprising conclusion that not only social origin but also a world outlook had no essential bearing upon talent. In February a voluntary recruitment of two thousand Komsomol members for the naval training school had been announced. Volodya Lukashevich had sent in his papers and was soon to leave for Kronstadt. Gury had decided to take the Petrograd courses in speech-training. According to him, these were the only courses in the world in which there was a special department for oratory. People who didn't know how to put two words together went into this department and were turned into first-class orators in something like two or three years.

Andrei was going to Moscow, to the medical faculty of the University. "Will you be with Mitya?" I asked him, but he replied that Mitya had enough to do without him. This was said in a kind of casual, nonchalant way, though I knew very well—from Andrei himself—that it was Mitya who had warmly urged him to take up medicine. For Andrei, however, it was important for some reason that nobody should doubt his complete independence in this matter.

"By the way," he said, "do you know what an idea I've had? I've persuaded Uncle to give us a course of lectures."

## I TAKE A COURSE OF LECTURES

No longer were piano crates standing in the Lvovs' yard. They had been burned during the Civil War. The yard had become like an overgrown garden. Chestnut-trees were rare in Lopakhin but a large one transplanted itself here from somewhere or other, struck root and grew. With an old shawl thrown round his shoulders, Pavel Petrovich sat under the chestnut-tree in his arm-chair; that's why, when later on I called back to mind the old doctor's lectures, my first thought was always about that chestnut-tree standing in full bloom, its straight, orderly "candles," rosy in the setting sun.

Evidently the words "give us a course of lectures" must have made a deep impression on me, otherwise when getting ready for the first lecture I should not have put on my only respectable frock, which was made of voile with frills. It turned out that this was a mistake. I always wore the voile frock for dances and now found myself at once in a dancing mood rather than a scientific one. That must have been the reason why I looked at the boys more than I listened to Pavel Petrovich. Then I began to look at them "psychologically"; sometimes it used to amuse me to do this. "There's Gury," I would think. "What sort of a chap is he? Why are all the girls in love with him, and even I, though I'm not crazy about him, want him to court me and not, for example, Nina?"

Nevertheless I mentally said "No" to Gury as though he had made a declaration of love to me and was impatiently awaiting my answer. What I didn't like was his way of discussing every subject with equal facility, and that he was too fond of making speeches. He only felt happy when he was the centre of attention. There he was now, sitting cross-legged on the grass—he wrote something rapidly in his note-book and then shrugged his shoulders with bewilderment, as though he did not agree with Pavel Petrovich. "No, no," I thought again. And I set about examining Andrei "psychologically."

He wore an absent look, but in the depths of his eyes was hidden a kind of steadfastness, and from this steadfastness it was evident that he was listening with concentrated attention. Listening and thinking; and I should have liked to know what about.

He wasn't at all like either Gury or Volodya, and I didn't know how I would answer him if he were suddenly to tell me that he loved me. But that was impossible. He had told me himself once that he would never fall in love because "love means the hold of one person over another, and usually of the woman over the man."

Meanwhile the doctor went on reading, and the lecture must have been interesting, because I noticed that Nina was crooking her fingers so as to remember the most important things and repeat them to herself when she got back home—that was her method for remembering. I looked into her absorbed, pretty face, thought that she was doing the right thing in going to the Conservatoire, for which only talent was needed, sighed, and began to listen to the lecture.

That day Pavel Petrovich talked about viruses, that is, about invisible microbes, but he began with a story about the night-watchman who was fond of looking at "little creatures" through a magnifying glass. Of course I had known from long before that this was not a story at all, that the name of the night-watchman was Anton van Leeuwenhoek and that he was the first man in the world to gaze into the realm of the smallest living creatures, myriads of which live in the water, the air, the earth, under the earth, in men's bodies, and in those of animals, insects and birds. Nevertheless, this was a visible world, and Anton van Leeuwenhoek's service to science was precisely that he had seen it.

"Imagine," Pavel Petrovich was saying, "that besides this world of visible microbes, whose life is revealed to us under the lenses of the microscope, there is yet another, absolutely invisible world. This is the world of microbes so immeasurably tiny that there is not the slightest possibility of seeing them even through the most powerful of microscopes. However much you might strain your eyes, and however much you looked through two of the thinnest of glass slides between which is enclosed a particle of this world, you would see nothing."

And the old doctor explained to us that this invisible world had been discovered as far back as 1892 by a Russian botanist named Ivanovsky, who worked on tobacco mosaic disease and showed that the agents of this disease passed freely through filters which retained all other microbes. Ivanovsky was at that time still quite a young man, a laboratory assistant at the Academy of Science, and Pavel Petrovich evidently knew him well, otherwise he could not have told us in such detail how Ivanovsky's teacher, Academician Famintsin, solicited a research grant for his pupil and how Ivanovsky refused to accept it on the grounds that "perhaps he did not possess scientific talents."

"Exceptional modesty," said Pavel Petrovich in a tone as though he were at once proud of this modesty and yet heartily regretted it. "That was the feature which in the end harmed his discovery."

How was this modesty expressed? First of all in the fact that Ivanovsky did virtually nothing to establish his priority, though only six years after him other scientists stumbled upon the same phenomenon. Secondly, having demonstrated the existence of an entire unknown world, he gave it no name.

"And a name is an important thing," said Pavel Petrovich. "That which has no name wanders about in science unprotected and anybody can take it into his own house and give it his own name."

This was said with special force and Andrei and I understood that the old doctor was comparing his own fate as a scientist with that of Ivanovsky and was talking, not only about Ivanovsky, but also about himself. The other youngsters didn't suspect this because they didn't know about Pavel Petrovich's work on some ordinary green mould in which he had found medicinal properties.

The doctor lectured to us throughout July and we didn't miss a single lecture—even Nina, who frankly admitted that when Pavel Petrovich spoke about the enmity between microbes she always recalled with amazing constancy the story of "The War of the Mice and the Frogs," which her father had read to her when she was a child. And when Pavel Petrovich said that medicine was necessary only in order to "rouse Nature from sleep," she invariably pictured to herself an old lady in pince-nez, like Agnia Petrovna, who was nodding on a bench in the garden and whom it was necessary to awaken quickly before she fell off the bench.

* * *

It rained from early morning that day, and we gathered in the old doctor's room instead of in the courtyard. The familiar ancient photos in mother-of-pearl frames stood on the harmonium. There was the lady in the long dress walking down an avenue holding up her sweeping train. There was the tall, broad-shouldered gentleman in the loose summer suit standing on a bridge and leaning slightly on the rail while, below him, under the bridge, there flowed by a strange foreign river, with smooth waves like folds of silk. Could it really be the doctor, with such youthful, merry, rather prominent eyes, with that queer, slightly bifurcated upper lip which one couldn't see nowadays because of his moustache? Yes, it was he, in 1871. What a long time ago! And I remembered Andrei telling me that Pavel Petrovich had lived in Paris during the Commune.

He had promised to tell us this time about his work on green mould, but he began from afar, talking about experiment and observation.

"Carried away by experimentation," he said, "medicine has since Pasteur's time almost completely abandoned observation, which in former times was the foundation of natural science in general and of the science of man in particular. And it was just this fact which led to overlooking the protective forces which the organism had developed within itself in the course of thousands of years."

This was Pavel Petrovich's central idea and he came back to it several times, as though he feared that, if he were to stop speaking about it, this thought which was so dear to him would get mixed up with others and become merely a noise like the sound of rain on the window.

His shoulders hunched, his small, vigorously clenched fists resting on his knees, the doctor talked and at the same time watched everyone, moving his eyes from one face to another. I found it a little frightening even, when his wise eyes, gazing out of their dark cavities, rested on me. He seemed to be expecting something from us, hoping for it, trusting in it. And I began to think that the old doctor's theory had long since become transformed into a feeling which was not unlike the feeling of hopeless love.

Agasha came in just as Pavel Petrovich, having got back to his green mould, was telling us how this example had made him think about the processes which go on in the organisms of microbes. Agasha wore an air of mystery and triumph. She stood on the threshold, pondered a moment and then said:

"Tanya, dear, someone to see you!"

## FATHER

I had often thought about my father of late; incidentally, long before Mother's death. One day, without telling her, I had written to him at his Kamchatka address, and had received the reply that the person named was no longer working in Petropavlovsk but had moved to Alexeyevsk Station on the Amur Railway. That was strange; the map showed that Alexeyevsk was two thousand miles from Petropavlovsk. I pondered, and wrote no more. But then, when Mother died, I wrote to Father again and from then onwards began to think about him very frequently. My old, long-forgotten image of the strong, influential man that my father must have become during those years came back to me, though now, of course, I didn't imagine him like Robinson Crusoe dressed from head to foot in skins of sables and silver foxes. For some reason I thought that I might receive a telegram from him reading: "Deeply grieved am coming meet me," and, one winter morning, I would take a sleigh to the station very early, when two long, glittering tracks left by the sleigh would be dimly visible in the darkness. There I would stand, on the deserted frost-covered platform, worried because I would be afraid that he might not recognize me at once. Then, roaring and discharging a cloud of steam from under its wheels, the train would draw in, and a tall, stout Army officer, his greatcoat carelessly flung open, would descend from a carriage. Father's movements are easy, confident, he speaks, and I hear his strong, imperious voice. Pausing, he glances up and down the platform and finds me. "Tanya!" And, weeping with joy, I fling myself into his arms....

Entering the kitchen I discovered with surprise a little man sitting by the table and holding his cap on his knees; he stood up and smiled uncertainly when he saw me.

"You've come to see me?" I asked.

"Yes."

He was wearing a Russian tunic, which stuck out unbecomingly from under his crumpled jacket. I felt nothing, but merely looked at his scanty, fluffy hair, his fair, greying moustache, too big for so small a face, and tried to recall: "Where have I seen this man before?"

"Don't you know me?"

"Your face is familiar," I said uncertainly.

He laughed.

"What a situation," he said good-humouredly. "My own daughter and she doesn't recognize me! It's like in a play."

He had said "my own daughter," and Agasha had evidently understood this expression in the literal sense, that is, that I was this man's daughter. She began to get angry and push me towards him. I elbowed her off. I didn't understand. Why "own daughter"? What did he mean: "It's like in a play"?

At that moment the little moustached face quivered, his eyes began to flicker, his nose reddened. A strange feeling that we had suddenly ceased to be distant and alien passed from him to me and was instantly mingled with disappointment, regret, consternation.

"Father?" I asked in a trembling voice.

He nodded and took me in his arms....

I recall that, without knowing why, I went back into the old doctor's room and whispered to Andrei:

"My father's come back."

And Andrei looked at me with astonishment.

Then we went home. I noticed that Father took leave of Agasha very dashingly, twirling his moustaches and clicking his heels. He still hadn't asked me about Mother. I waited impatiently—now he would ask! But he kept on talking about how he had bought some velvet for a dress for me from some Chinese merchants, but they had swindled him.

"You see, it's like this with us," he said proudly. "Arrive at Petropavlovsk—sell our goods, take a bath, buy things: a silk shirt, velveteen breeches, patent-leather boots, a silver watch with a five-foot chain."

In Karl Liebknecht Street he stopped and began patting his lips with two fingers: later I was to recognize that he always did this when anything worried or embarrassed him.

"Well, then, so that's the position now..." he said. "Hellish business, eh? I've brought a wife with me, you know."

I was evidently taken aback, for the note-books in which I had been jotting down my notes from the lectures suddenly fell from my hands on to the pavement.

My father bent down and picked them up.

"Perhaps it was imagination, the devil only knows," he said. "But as a matter of fact I couldn't get along without a wife. I've made a mess of things, eh? I'm not happy about it. A civil marriage, let's call it that."

Silently, I walked away. I didn't know where I was going. My father stood still for a little while and then came after me. He patted his lips with his fingers and kept saying, "You must see all sides of the question." When we were in the Ovrazhki he thrust the note-books into my hands. I took them and said to him:

"Don't follow me."

He remained on the riverside path while I went down to the Tesma and kept on walking and thinking until my legs gave out under me and I sat down on the rustling shingle at the very edge of the water.

* * *

When I returned home my father and his wife were having supper. The table was spread, tins of food stood on it, big slices had been cut from the loaf, and Father was pouring vodka into glasses.

It was curious they received me as though there were nothing the matter. My father's wife, a thin little woman with white eyelashes and a small wisp of hair twisted up in the nape of her neck, said, "Won't you join us!" as though I were the visitor and she the hostess.

My father fussed around at first but soon sat down and started telling me about the Amur spirit-traders—apparently it was spirit that they had in their glasses.

"Gold and spirit," he said cryptically. "Them were our gods."

He said "them."

Altogether they were in a good mood and were not much put out by my just sitting at table and not saying a word. Maria Petrovna glanced into the room; she was worried, no doubt, because I hadn't been home for so long. Avdotya Nikonovna (that was my stepmother's name) at once invited her to the table. At first Maria Petrovna was shy and wouldn't drink; I felt that she was uncomfortable in my presence. Later on, though, she drank and grew quite talkative. Then in came a market woman whose acquaintance Avdotya Nikonovna had made in the bazaar, and she, too, was invited to the table.

I listened with a feeling of hopelessness to Avdotya Nikonovna's incessant gabbling as she ate, drank, cut bread, opened tins, washed up, all of which she did quickly and dexterously. When the same feeling I stared at my father's trembling fingers as he lifted his glass to his lips and then, having drained it, washed the spirit down with cold water. With disgust I watched the market woman, who had begun to importune Maria Petrovna and suddenly started laughing in an unnaturally thin voice which came very strangely from such a bulky woman with heavy shoulders like a wrestler's.

It was late already, the visitors had departed, but the new masters had still not retired to bed. Avdotya Nikonovna removed the unnecessary crockery, but two glasses and the bottle were left on the table. I understood that this was for the morning. They were tipsy but behaved very amiably to me. Avdotya Nikonovna even called me a little orphan and wanted to caress me, but I gave her such a look that she babbled something and turned away.

I found it hard to lie down to sleep but nevertheless I did go to bed and pulled the coverlet over my head. Then, suddenly, I heard them break into song. Their elbows on the table, solemn, pale and wistful-looking, but contented, they sat opposite each other and sang:

*A glorious sea is this holy Baikal,*
*A glorious ship is this old omul* barrel.*
*Hey, Barguzin wind, whip up the billows. . . .*

* * *

For the first few days I was afraid that Avdotya Nikonovna would start changing everything round the way she wanted it, and I was furious in anticipation from a feeling of jealousy and resentment on Mother's behalf. No such thing happened, however. Everything stayed as it was. Avdotya Nikonovna didn't even tidy up the room, but only washed the dishes; everything else I did, just as before. She was busy. During the first week after her arrival she got to know all Lopakhin and was now continually going out visiting.

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* The *omul* is a kind of salmon found in Lake Baikal.

The bazaar took up half her day and she spent the other half giving a detailed account of what she had seen there.

Father likewise never had a free moment. He declared that he would not seek a job, for "the dawn had come of the rebirth of the Russian proletariat of world labour" and people like him ought "serenely to await an assignment." While waiting for his assignment, Father wrote stories. One day he told me with a complacent smile that he was a "voluntary fanatic" in literature. Every day he wrote about five stories, sometimes more, so that during the year that we were living together he accumulated several hundred altogether. I give only one example, as he wrote it, because it is impossible to convey it in my own words:

"Old wife's tale of Mother's mother in the days of serfdom.

"Mother's mother was left a widow. They began to shift her from the village to the outskirts. She and her sister took up all their belongings and set off to see the Grand Duchess. They arrive, the general on duty takes out a banknote, lays it on the table, seizes them by the plaits and bashes their heads together. And all this in the front entrance!"

The other stories were of the same kind.

He was very pleased to find the *Poverty Is No Crime* poster still hanging in my room and told me that that had been a benefit performance for him and that he had had a tremendous success in the part of Lyubim Tortsov.* He had received so many flowers that he stood up to his neck in them and the next morning had sold them to a merchant for 224 rubles 50 kopeks. The poster stated that P. N. Vlasenkov played the part of a servant, but Father said that that was another occasion: at the benefit performance he had played Lyubim Tortsov.

Best of all, though, he liked to talk about the spirit-traders. There were, apparently, certain spirit-traders on the

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* I.e., the leading part.

Amur; some were Russian and some were Chinese, and Father was proud that both lots trusted him equally, because he never gave away the Russians' secrets to the Chinese, or *vice versa*. These were rather terrifying stories he told. Some spirit-traders hunted the Chinese gold-prospectors, others killed storekeepers. One would invariably seize a horse by the bridle and another would say, "Well, dear friend, come out. You cheated us, and now we're getting even with you." Other stories were political and Father always played the chief part in these. At "Mikhailo-Chesnokov" station he had disarmed some gendarmes, and a cavalry sergeant-major in person had given him his gold medals. On the 15th of August, 1918, he had organized the first rest-day voluntary work undertaken by the railwaymen's union. He had tricked a Japanese officer, saying to him, "Your soldier shoot, shoot, but you write, write," and the officer gave him a permit to go into a store where Berdan rifles were lying under sacks of flour, and Father had taken the Berdans away and turned them over to the partisans; and so forth.

I was always the first to wake up and I used to gaze at him for a long time. He lay on his back, pressing his head into the pillow as though he feared it might fly away during the night. Avdotya Nikonovna lay beside him, but I wasn't interested in her. Father! It was easier to think about him when he was asleep, perhaps because then his moustaches hung down mournfully, his nose became pale, and it was plain that he himself didn't know what to do with all the nonsense that his head was stuffed with. Father! Mother had been unable to the end of her life to reconcile herself to the fact that he had thrown her over and he, returning after eight years' absence, hadn't even asked what she had died of. What was to be done with this father of mine, who suddenly assumed, even as he slept, a pitifully boastful expression? Who would wake up, have a drink, wouldn't wash, would feebly flap his arms and start to talk—about what? Did it matter? And I started to think how everything had changed since that night at the Pustynka, as though the unhappiness which Andrei and I had talked about had been lying in wait for me.

"But didn't you resolve to accomplish something great?" I asked myself. "Yes, but Mother died, and that was a terrible blow. Father has come back after many years of separation as a wretched, degraded man. It's necessary to study, but you have to go to work at the book centre—now, when an article has appeared in *The Young Proletarian* entitled *Take Science by Storm* and when you yourself, even before this article was published, had decided to study anew all the main subjects in the whole of the second-category school curriculum? But didn't you agree with Andrei that the will and striving towards an aim are two sides of one and the same problem? Yes, the day will come when what you do will win its way into thousands and millions of hearts and will light up your life with a dazzling radiance of happiness!"

## FAREWELL

Volodya went off first; then Nina, to the Conservatoire; they had to sit for the entrance exams. Gury and Andrei, however, could go much later, for only the school-leaving certificate was needed for entry to the University and to the speech-training course. Only the three of us now attended the doctor's lectures, which became more interesting each time. Later Gury decided that at the same time as he was following the course of speech-training he would enrol at *Stumazit*, a "Studio of Mass Spectacles and Pageants," which was taking in about 10,000 people. He went off, and just the two of us were left. But the lectures continued.

Pavel Petrovich would begin in a level, low, very monotonous voice. Later on a feeble flush would appear in his hollow cheeks and spread to his temples, which looked somehow especially old, so that at the sight of them one involuntarily thought of death. Then he would straighten up as much as he could, lift his big, ugly, forward-jutting head, and his voice would begin to ring out triumphant and strong, as though he had before him not school children but men of science.

He had long ago finished and sent to R. the short article in which he set forth the essentials of his theory, but there had been no answer, and the old doctor looked gloomy when I reminded him of the article.

I remember the day when Andrei went away; it was still quite summerly, though at the end of August it was fairly cold in our parts, and rain fell. The day before we had agreed to meet in the Ovrazhki at seven o'clock in the morning. (Why at seven? I don't know. It must have been because nobody met at such an early hour.

There were rafts on the Tesma, very many of them, so that it was possible to cross from one bank to the other without getting one's feet wet. The raftsmen were talking and their voices rang out distinctly as though they were expressly taking part in that scene of a fresh, clear morning, composed of big, even logs, from which here and there arose a white cloudlet of vapour; of the sun's rays as they broke through this cloudlet and suddenly blazed in rainbow colours; of the gulls flying over the Tesma; of a feeling of gaiety and yet also of a kind of sense that one was actively living, without which all this life would suddenly have congealed and remained as though in an enchanted sleep.

Andrei was waiting for me. He was wearing a short grey jacket with bright buttons (formerly Mitya's), well-pressed trousers and a tightly-drawn belt. He looked very smart, and I thought sorrowfully that he was already at the other end of the world from me and from everything in Lopakhin.... I didn't suspect that at that moment he was more than ever before full of all that had to do with Lopakhin.

"Are you coming today? Uncle will be lecturing," he said; just for the sake of saying something, it seemed to me.

I replied that I should certainly be coming.

"Well, how are things with you?"

"Same as usual."

"Every day?"

That meant, did my father and stepmother get drunk every day? I nodded.

"They could be cured of that," said Andrei. "But, of course, they don't want to be, because they like getting tight. By the way, that's an interesting question—the place of vodka in life. Physiologically, it's a matter of the absorption of oxygen by the blood and the influence of alcohol fumes on this process. But socially, it's a matter.... Can't you move somewhere else, away from them?"

"Where to?"

"To our place. Oh, but I forgot!" He made a wry face. "Mother's become a bit peculiar lately."

After Mitya's departure Agnia Petrovna had become obsessed with the idea that too much food was being eaten in her house. Andrei and I had not talked about this previously.

"Never mind," I said. "It's the last year. And then...."

"To Moscow?"

"No, to Petrograd."

"Have you got anybody in Petrograd?"

I said "No" because I couldn't count as anybody the unknown Vasily Alexeyevich to whom Mother had written a long letter without receiving any reply.

In Petrograd, however, there was the Institute of Screen Art. But Andrei didn't know yet that I had decided to become a film actress.

He was silent a little while.

"I'll be on holiday in December," he resumed gravely, "and I'll persuade you then to send your papers to Moscow. You've chosen Petrograd under the influence of the books you're reading but you can take it from me that medical life is very much richer in Moscow."

We had reached the pier and, without any previous arrangement, we turned back. As was customary on days when timber was being floated, the bazaar had moved from Commercial Square to the Tesma and it was dirty and noisy on the pier.

"Andrei," I began, speaking with difficulty. "I've long wanted to tell you.... Of course, it must come as a surprise to you, though I made my decision a long time ago and only kept it to myself because I was afraid the others would laugh at me. And in fact... perhaps I haven't the talent.... Acting talent, I mean. But you understand...."

Andrei listened quietly, but when I mentioned acting talent his face began to twitch and quiver with surprise. He was upset; I could tell it at once.

"I know you're going to reproach me for not having fought against this passion. But I was ashamed because I'd been saying for so many years that I was going to be a doctor and now, all of a sudden, I think of becoming an actress, a film actress, besides."

Andrei's face quivered again, this time with still greater alarm than before.

"Steady on," he said slowly. "But you see, for that.... Well, what would you think if I suddenly decided to study to be a singer? You know what sort of a voice I've got. Nina's going to the Conservatoire, and there's no doubt that she's got a gift. But it's not known yet whether her gift is for acting, because there are some excellent singers who can't act at all."

"Of course! But if one has even a little talent, a tiny bit, it can be developed if one works with determination. For instance, I read about how one actress taught herself to express something completely different from what she was feeling. Remember we talked at the Pustynka about striving to do something great in the name of the people and for their happiness? Well, is it so impossible to achieve an aim like that by devoting one's life to the cinema?"

Andrei shrugged his shoulders with chagrin.

"It appears to me that this is happening in a rather different way," he said, gently. "In cases like this the decision is made not just logically, it's a sort of natural outcome when a person has talent. I think it was Lev Tolstoi who said that a writer is one who can't help writing. On the whole, it seems to me that you'll change your mind about this."

"Perhaps," I said. But I thought, "Not for anything!"

We walked down to the pier again and turned back.

"Yes, it's hard to decide," Andrei went on, not doubting at all that we were thinking about the same thing, that is, the part played by inclination in the choice of a profession. "For instance, Gury says that I want to go in for medicine because I have a pantheistic approach to nature. That's nonsense, because pantheism means deifying nature, whereas I intend to study it."

We were now standing on the "Flat-Iron," as they called the highest point on the river bank, where the Tesma turns a corner. From the "Flat-Iron" one could see the Pustynka, and I gazed at the cupola of the monastery church which was now gleaming and now dark, as the clouds passed across between it and the sun. Incomprehensibly, I suddenly wanted to cry. But I thought a moment, and it seemed comprehensible enough. My best friend was going away, he whose advice I had always sought on the problems which life presented, he who loved to repeat, "Only the simple can throw light on the complex," and was right. And now this "simplicity" that threw light on all my "complexity" was leaving me, while the problems were growing greater and greater every day....

"What's the matter? You're crying?" He took my hand gently in his. "You're sorry because I'm going away?"

I hadn't been looking at him, but he spoke to me in such a tone that I turned towards him. Andrei was somehow different, not his usual self, but pale, with a radiant look. It was as though he were flying, as though it would be nothing for him to take off into the air and soar over the Tesma.

"Tanya.... You don't know...."

And he quickly put my hands to his cheek. It was so strange that I stopped crying in an instant, though my eyes from time to time continued to grow moist. I took my hands away and Andrei at once became the old Andrei, just as though someone had blown hard and put out the light that shone in his wide eyes.

That was the most important thing that happened during our meeting. We strolled along for quite a while after that and when we were returning homeward, I myself took Andrei's hand, but nothing came of it, except that he looked absolutely straight in front of him and I walked along feeling for some time that my hand lay in something wooden, bent at a right angle.

By ten o'clock I was at the book centre and the rest of the day passed as usual. I read, I put together a book-box for a workers' faculty, and prepared for a trigonometry examination which had been put off at my request until the autumn. But to everything that I did was linked, whether appropriately or not, the thought of that strange moment, just as when you are listening to music and you think of something else. Somehow I recalled that, the year before, Volodya Lukashevich had told me that he loved me and I had explained to him at length that he had no right to talk of such things because he really knew nothing of love.

That was a wonderful, noble confession, and I had borne myself splendidly, because everything was clear: what Volodya said and what I said. But, here, nothing was clear. For Andrei hadn't said that he loved me.

They came from the workers' faculty for the book-box. I handed it over to them and went on thinking. . . . Yes, that was it, he hadn't said it! Why, then, did I feel strange and uncomfortable when I thought of that moment? Why did I tremble a little when I imagined a discussion about love with Andrei and why could I think of nothing except what he himself had said, that love was the hold of a woman over a man?

I meditated on this the entire day and, exhausted, decided at last that it would be much better if Andrei were to remain the Andrei I had known since childhood and who once put cockroaches to sleep with my help. . . .

I think I didn't listen very attentively to the old doctor, though his lecture was interesting. Andrei, it seemed to me, wasn't listening either. We said good-bye in the hall. He said that he would write to me as soon as he got to Moscow. I went away thinking, "Well, that's that."

It was in the evening and already dark. I was going home, and the swallows that were soon to fly away from Lopakhin, too, were hovering low over the old chapel. That was that! My father and stepmother must already be sitting and drinking. One might have thought that from the day they had arrived they had never got up from the table, with the bottle, the tins, the plate and the bread cut in large slices. I went straight to Maria Petrovna's room (recently I had often spent the night there) and lay down on the divan without putting the light on. That was that! The through train from Arkhangelsk to Moscow passed Lopakhin Station at two o'clock in the morning. A cab would be standing now outside the "depot" and Agnia Petrovna, who got angry when strangers saw how hard it was for her to say good-bye to her children, would be standing in the doorway, her head proudly held high. Andrei kisses her awkwardly. He settles into the sleigh, the cabman jerks the reins, and slowly, old, very old, familiar houses, gardens and walls begin to pass by, to right and left. Razvyazhskaya Street, Bolshaya Mikhailovskaya Street, the Slope, pass by and disappear. Who knows—perhaps for ever?

My eyes were full of tears and I paid no attention to a sound on the stairs as though somebody were stamping up them heavily with his boots. The front door of our place was not locked and, while this heavy stamping did not resemble Maria Petrovna's step, I decided nevertheless that it must be hers. It was not. Someone knocked at the door of my room and my father said loudly, "Tanya's not at home." I jumped up and opened the door. It was Andrei. He stood on the top stair, dressed in his overcoat and high-boots, without his cap, and his manner was undecided, embarrassed.

I don't know what I said—probably just "Andrei!" and he "Tanya!" Then he rushed towards me and clasped me in his arms—so hard that I was even lifted a little off the floor. We kissed and started talking to each other incoherently about something. Suddenly he said in a broken voice, "Don't forget!"

And he ran off down the stairs. I rushed into my room, intending to give him something as a keepsake, couldn't find it, and hastily ran downstairs after him. The cab had already turned down the Slope and the cabman was holding the reins high, ready to pull the horses back.

## WORRIES

Why did it seem to me that the strange feeling of soaring, which did not leave me all through the winter of 1922-23, was in my heart already before Andrei's departure? But it was beclouded only until the moment I ran after him and saw his cab, its hood thrown back, turning into the Slope. When I rushed out of the house I felt as though I had suddenly risen into the air in order to see the future opening there, somewhere far beyond the Slope.

Practical Komsomol work, about which the boys had constantly talked, began as soon as they left. In the autumn representatives of the district Komsomol were appointed to the District Department of Public Education and we had to get down to serious work in the schools. Besides liquidating illiteracy we had to liquidate political illiteracy as well and in this connection I was assigned the task of reading a paper on "Genoa," that is, on the conference of capitalist countries which was taking place in Genoa. The workers from the tannery came to the Komsomol Club to listen to my talk and though I trembled a little deep down in my heart there was the happy feeling of soaring, now dipping and now flying upward.

In the middle of the year a new Head was appointed and his very first words were startling as far as we were concerned: he told the Komsomol cell that, before settling international issues, it should set its own house in order, namely, that it should wash the floors and walls and repair and paint the desks. Later he explained that the main task of a pupil was to study, and, though at the meeting of the school collective voices were raised to point out that in that way we might find ourselves back in the old pre-revolutionary school, which people had also attended in order to study, the new Head's point of view triumphed, and regular work in two shifts began, in accordance with a timetable posted in the cloakroom.

Of course, school work, which eventually came to take up nearly all my time, gave me a lot of worry during that memorable winter. But there were also other worries and cares.

There was, for example, the worry which awakened before I did. My father! He began to grope and feel, with his eyes closed, for the bottle set out on the table over night. All day long he roamed round the room, the house, the town, and, in the evening, grown younger and jollier, with jauntily turned-up moustaches and a gleaming red nose, he would sit down to table. He would come to see me at the book centre and, for a long time, with a clouded expression of pride on his face, would watch me read and make summaries or solve my maths problems. Suddenly he took to boasting about me before his visitors, the most distinguished amongst whom was the pastry-cook who had opened the "Simon" baker's shop in Lopakhin.

At first I thought that Father was very contented with his lot, and for some reason this irritated me most of all. In fact, he liked everything that he did; he was proud, for example, of his stories. He was proud of his political past and was apparently convinced that, but for him, the partisan movement on the Amur would have been destroyed at the start and the Far East would have remained for ever in the hands of the interventionists and Whites. Everything that happened in the world was directly connected with him —be it Patriarch Tikhon's departure to the Donskoi Monastery or the flight of the Sultan's family from Constantinople. He got especially excited about the "Living Church"; once he actually woke up in the middle of the night and said triumphantly:

"Well, now, there's an end to the rule of the princes of the Church!"

Twice or three times a week, smartened and shaved, his moustaches turned up jauntily, and Avdotya Nikonovna on his arm, he would go to the Town Court. This was his principal entertainment. They would return from the court enlivened and happy, and the whole evening they would warmly discuss the sentences, constantly interrupting each other. Avdotya Nikonovna invariably demanded sterner punishments, especially if the accused was a woman.

In short, they were happy people. The money they had brought from the Amur was giving out, but that gave them little worry. Avdotya Nikonovna, who was superstitious, at first had been afraid that Mother would appear during the night and do something to her—smother her, or drive her out. But later she evidently overcame her fears, because Mother's things began gradually to disappear from the room. I told Maria Petrovna about this and she removed the Kashmir shawl, the earrings and the books for safekeeping. Incidentally, this happened in Father's presence and he wasn't in the least put out, but just winked one eye and said:

"To prevent them from being snitched?"

One day when I went to bed, I found the following letter under my pillow.

"Darling daughter! I look with loathing upon my life. I'm not afraid of a bullet in my head, death doesn't frighten me. It's a gloomy life when you have to live with a woman who's never been anything more than a cook. I have simply shrivelled up and look like a skeleton. I am suffering and am ashamed that I, your father, am ruining you, my poor dear.

"Your Father."

I did not answer this letter and some days later I received a second, and then a third. Of course these were ridiculous letters, if only because in nearly every one he informed me that "his life was growing worse and worse," as though we were miles apart. Yet there was something very sad about them, so that now, when I looked at my father, I began vaguely to suspect that he was not so happy as might appear at first sight.

One day we were left alone; Avdotya Nikonovna went out to visit friends. I had a slight throat trouble, stayed at home all day and, when night came, lay down with a book and dozed off, listening to the monotonous sound of the rain. The wind now died down, now flung the drops violently against the roof, and when, still half asleep, I opened my eyes, I saw my father, his head hanging low, walking to and fro across the room and glancing at me from time to time with a timid, uneasy expression. At last, patting himself on the lips with two fingers, he paused by my bed. It seemed that he wanted to talk to me, but at that moment, without myself knowing why, I closed my eyes firmly and pretended to be asleep. The wind blew up again, the rain beat on the roof, then calmed down and, when I opened my eyes, my father was on his knees beside me, weeping. In a trembling voice, I said:

"Get up, Daddy."

I don't remember what he started to say, probably it was something silly or funny. All the same, it was the moment when I realized: whether or not he drinks, and however abject he may be, he is my father, for whom I can't help caring, and who loves me.

It would be hard to define how our relations changed after that evening. But change they did. I felt this when, the following day, he talked to me for the first time about Mother. . . .

But I had another care which had crept unnoticed into my life and was to remain there for ever. It was something that accompanied me from one season to another, from childhood to youth, from youth to maturity; something which tragically came to an end on one of the saddest days of my life, only to reappear within a few years in a new form, majestically profound. The name of this great care was—the old doctor.

## NEW YEAR'S EVE

As before, I went to see him on Sundays and Thursdays. The lectures were finished but, as I had noticed that the doctor had difficulty in writing (he made long, tremulous characters, resembling Old-Slavonic ligatures), I offered to write to his dictation and thereafter we worked together twice a week: he dictated and I took down and read each page aloud to him as it was completed.

A great deal became much clearer to me now and the "theory of the protective forces of the organism" became to me less hazy than hitherto. The more I understood the old doctor, however, the less could I master the feeling of distrust which invariably came over me when he started to talk about the green mould, to which every day he ascribed greater importance. It was, after all, very much like an *idée fixe*, a kind of mental disease which is very difficult to cure in old people. As if he guessed my disbelief, however, he dictated to me one day a whole chapter on the miracles of science. The essential idea of this chapter was that at first contemporaries regarded nearly all the greatest discoveries as miracles. But years passed and it turned out that these were not miracles at all, but could, in fact, be explained quite simply. "And the unusual has a claim to recognition" —that was the phrase, also a very simple one, which concluded the chapter on the miracles of science.

The new Head of the school came over one day to see the old doctor and spent the whole evening with him. He had been, as it happened, a student of one of Pavel Petrovich's colleagues at the University, so that they had an interesting conversation about the affair which had led to Pavel Petrovich being banished from Petersburg. The Head introduced

Pavel Petrovich to the Chairman of the Lopakhin Town Soviet, a very lively and original man, and the Chairman became interested in Pavel Petrovich's "work" and offered to send it to publishing house of the District Political Education Department, though a book of such size would account for nearly three-quarters of their year's plan. But Pavel Petrovich thanked him and declined the offer.

"The work is not yet completed. The main part is still to come," he said. "Besides, I haven't given up all hope of receiving an answer from R., to whom I sent a brief outline of the work."

In short, there were evenings when the old doctor put aside even our "dictations" because these estimable people were with him. But a day came when I met at his place a man whom one could hardly describe as estimable.

It was on the eve of New Year's Day, 1923, and I ran in to see Pavel Petrovich during the day because in the evening there was to be a fancy-dress ball at the House of Culture and Lenochka Butakova and I had decided to go as Tatyana and Olga.* Undoubtedly I must have been deeply preoccupied with this important matter, otherwise I should have recognized at first sight the fat man in the well-cut grey suit who came out of the old doctor's room and stood in the hallway taking his hat off the peg.

Agasha was also standing in the hallway and, as I turned round, I noticed that he thrust a crumpled piece of paper into her hand, probably some money, and there seemed something familiar in that gesture. Then, having put his hat on and picked up his stick, he moved towards the door, his overcoat flapping, and it suddenly dawned on me that this was Rayevsky.

I hadn't seen him since that night when the sleigh in which Glashenka lay half-dead had stood before our tenement building and he had glanced back timidly as he buttoned up the sleigh-rug—he was buttoning it up, and there was something base in those confused, unsure movements of his. Since then he had become transformed from a fat, clumsy *gymnasium* pupil into a solidly-built man, very well-dressed, in an overcoat with a fur collar and a hat carelessly pushed to the back of his head. But something mean remained and this involuntarily came into my mind, though I saw him only for a moment before he disappeared through the open door.

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* Two sisters, heroines in Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin*.

"Pavel Petrovich, do you know the man who was with you?" I cried, running into the old doctor's room.

"Yes, Tanya." His face was very downcast.

"Rayevsky!"

"Yes, yes."

"Why did he come? What does he do now? He's so well dressed. Is he going to live in Lopakhin? Did you know each other?"

"No," said Pavel Petrovich. "Apparently, he's a publisher. That is to say, he's the manager of a publishing business."

And he showed me a piece of pasteboard, folded in two, on which were printed the titles of some books with, above them, in large letters: " 'Times' Publishing House."

"He wants to publish your work?"

"Oh, no!" replied Pavel Petrovich.

I always used to ask him boldly what was worrying him and he would answer me, because his troubles were linked with that present life which was progressing before my eyes. But from childhood I had known that he had other, private sorrows to which he never referred, sorrows which belonged to that distant, forgotten world inhabited by the tall, broad-shouldered gentleman standing on the bridge over the river and the dark-eyed lady who had liked to be photographed in such unusual clothes. It seemed to me that Pavel Petrovich was worried now about something from that world and, while I was very eager to know what Rayevsky had to do with it, it was better not to ask. So I didn't.

We exchanged good wishes for the coming New Year and then, finding his way amongst his notes with difficulty, Pavel Petrovich began to dictate.

...It was about three o'clock in the morning. We were returning homeward and all the girls' feet were so tired from dancing that they would have liked to take off their shoes and walk in their stockings over the bluish, glittering snow. Lenochka Butakova was talking about fortune-telling. It turned out that none of us knew when one had to ask a passer-by his name—some said it was on New Year's Eve, but others thought Christmas Eve. We walked along the Ovrazhki arguing, laughing loudly, and then, in spite of ourselves, became hushed when a man came in sight in the distance, on the deserted river bank, crossed by the slanting shadows of the trees.

"Well now, girls, who'll be brave and ask?" said Lenochka.

A single lamp shone in the Ovrazhki, and, when the moon was hidden, the light it gave seemed like a big funnel into which little snow flakes whirled and fell. We drew near to it from opposite sides, we and the man, who somehow looked as though he didn't belong to Lopakhin.

"Oh, you cowards!"

And when there was only the light of the lamp between him and us, Lenochka stepped forward and asked, in a ringing voice:

"What is your name?"

Then everything happened at once. I gave a low cry as I recognized Rayevsky, the girls laughed and hid behind each other, and the moon came out from behind the clouds, as though on purpose to light up that fat face with its expression of irony.

"Be so kind as to tell me why you would like to know my name?" he asked, unhurriedly. "Do you think that even if I were called Lorenzo the Magnificent you would escape the sad fate of becoming the wife of some Fedka or Vaska or other?"

He laughed curtly and walked on, while we remained standing still. It couldn't be said that we felt offended, it was something quite different from that. It was as though an abyss had opened between this man and ourselves, and on its verge he had stood and threatened—whom, why? A bunch of girls who wished no harm to anyone and were going home from a dance and simply playing a prank—for none of us, of course, believed in this silly fortune-telling.

The ungainly-striding figure had long disappeared into the distance, we had for some time been talking about other things, but in our hearts there still remained a feeling of unpleasantness, as though, in the darkness of that New Year's Eve, we had stumbled against something slimy and soft, which had stung us in passing, and slid past.

## AN OLD STORY

I wasn't in any hurry to get up because New Year's Day was always a day when everything goes wrong. But it seemed to me that over my head they were talking about Lorenzo the Magnificent, and although I knew that I could sleep and sleep, my eyes opened willy-nilly. Yes, they were talking! True, they weren't talking about Lorenzo but, nevertheless, it was Rayevsky's voice; that was what startled me.

I lay still for another moment listening, then I jumped out of bed and through the folds of the screen I saw my father, who was standing in front of somebody, his head cocked on one side, and rubbing his hands together.

"Tanya, somebody's waiting to see you," he said, hearing that I had awakened.

"To see me?"

"Yes. Excuse me, what's your name and patronymic?"

"Sergei Vladimirovich."

"Get up, get up, you lazy girl," said my father, in an affected voice. "Sergei Vladimirovich, perhaps you'd like some tea?"

My hands trembled as I dressed, and suddenly a ringing, caused by my agitation, began in my head. Rayevsky had called to see me? How was that for news? And why should my father be talking in that affected voice and rubbing his hands so disgustingly?

I must have come out from behind the screen with a very haughty air, for Rayevsky grinned. Oh, I hated him for grinning like that. I wanted to kill him when I saw that expression on his face. But he politely rose and bowed.

"Good morning, Tanya," he said. "Did we wake you up?"

"It doesn't matter," I replied coldly. "What can I do for you?"

Rayevsky looked at me attentively. I don't know whether he guessed that I hated him, but a worried expression appeared on his full face with its blinking eyes.

"I've heard," he began, "that you know Pavel Petrovich Lebedev well. The first thing I did in Lopakhin was to present my profound respects to him. Now here's a chance for you to do him a great service."

He was silent for a moment, then went on, "This story began long ago, in the eighties of last century, when neither you nor I, of course, was yet born. In those far-off times there lived a famous actress whom every educated man in Russia knew and admired. She was called Olga Petrovna Krechetova; doubtless you have heard the name?"

"Yes, I have."

I had not only heard of Krechetova, I had read a lot about her. In the book *Famous Actors and Actresses*, for instance, a whole article was devoted to her, in which the writer affirmed that Krechetova performed so well that dramatists wrote parts specially for her—which was hard to believe!

"I chanced to see her when she was still with the theatre," Rayevsky went on, "and I can tell you, her acting left an unforgettable impression on me. For more than thirty years, she acted at the Alexandrinsky Theatre in Petrograd."

My father was listening to him with his mouth open, not metaphorically but literally. It was plain that he didn't merely like Rayevsky, the latter had really won his heart. Eventually it was more than I could stand and, going up to him from behind, I whispered to him:

"Daddy, please wait for me in Maria Petrovna's room."

He glanced over his shoulder at me in a startled way, nodded and went out.

This happened just by the way, and Rayevsky didn't hear me speak to my father. But he must have supposed that I had sent Father out purposely so that he, Rayevsky, might have a chance to talk frankly to me, because he was suddenly transformed from an amiable, solid man who talked in long sentences in an artificial voice into that slimy, darkly-ironical creature whom we had encountered during the night.

"Well now, look," he said abruptly. "I'm not here to waste time in reminiscences. The affair is much simpler. In his day, the old man used to correspond with Krechetova and he's kept a bundle of her letters. I need those letters. I must have them by tomorrow at the latest. Terms, five rubles per letter. Advance paid today."

It was terrible that he should have taken me unawares. I was thrown into confusion not only because he had stunned me with his impudence but also because a thousand surmises flashed before me in an instant. So that was who the beautiful lady with the dark eyes was, who liked to be photographed in such extraordinary finery! That was why the old doctor never spoke about his love—it was a bitter memory!

"Well?" asked Rayevsky, winking insolently.

"Get out!" I cried.

It was silly that I was throwing him out and at the same time addressing him politely. But it was not a time to bother about grammar. Everything in my soul was a-quiver and it seemed that it would be a wonder if I didn't go for him there and then with the bronze pestle, lying on the window-sill, which Avdotya Nikonovna used for cracking nuts....

* * *

"Pavel Petrovich, just imagine it, he came to see me!"

The doctor was dozing when I burst in upon him without taking my coat off, and didn't wake up at once. First, he put his hand over his eyes like a shade and stared at me:

"Who did?"

"Why, Rayevsky! He tried to get me to pinch the letters from you! For some reason or other he wants Krechetova's letters. He told me that she used to write to you. But who could have sent him to me? I saw him slip some money to Agasha. What a scoundrel! I sent him packing, but he didn't go; that is, he did go, but he went into Maria Petrovna's and he was there talking for a whole hour to my father. Ugh, his fat, disgusting mug! Pavel Petrovich, is it true that she used to write to you?"

"Yes, Tanya," said the old doctor. "We were friends at one time."

He wasn't very upset, only surprised, to hear that Rayevsky had been to see me.

"But why, why does he want these letters?"

"He wants to publish them."

"What do you mean, publish them? Print them?"

"That's right."

"How can he dare to publish private letters?"

"You see, she was a famous actress. And now, when she's dead..." (it seemed to me that he found it hard to utter the last word) "certain trashy people are trying.... Well, they want to make whatever money they can out of her name. Nobody knows about these letters, because... they are really private letters. And then various shady businessmen like this Rayevsky...."

He became thoughtful, then concluded, sadly:

"When I die, Tanya, you must burn these letters."

"That's enough, Pavel Petrovich" (I kissed him), "don't let's talk about it any more. And if Rayevsky comes again, whether to me or to you, we'll tell Ivanov" (that was the name of the chairman of the town Soviet) "and let him have Rayevsky sent to prison. Why, it was a crime he was suggesting to me! You should have heard how he spoke to me! He's a double-faced person."

"Two-faced."

"Two-faced then, it's all the same. To the devil with him! I remember, you taught me that when anything disagreeable happens in life it's only necessary to understand the cause of it and one's heart becomes lighter at once. I've cleared it up, haven't I?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, now let's get down to work. . . ."

But it wasn't so easy to escape from Rayevsky and I was sorry later that I hadn't actually told the chairman of the town Soviet about him. True, he didn't come to me any more, but he called twice on the doctor and at last Agnia Petrovna, in my presence, very strictly instructed Agasha never again to allow "that rogue" past the door.

## DECISION

Now, as I sat with Pavel Petrovich, I began to look with a different feeling upon the photo of the lady with the dark, sad eyes. What had prevented her from marrying Pavel Petrovich in those days when he was young and handsome? I very much wanted to ask the old doctor about it, but I couldn't make up my mind to do that and re-read again and again the article about Krechetova in *Famous Actors and Actresses.*

Later on I found a number of other books which contained information about her and gradually her life was revealed to me; not her whole life, of course, but only the externals, behind which it was difficult to guess what the real content had been. She was performing on the stage, apparently, already at the age of eight; one writer related how, when acting one of the boys dying of starvation in the tragedy *Ugolino*, she noticed that a colleague of hers, instead of being "tormented by hunger," was quietly eating a piece of pie. The young actress disapproved of this so much that, without hesitating, she seized the piece of pie and flung it into the wings. The other girl started to cry and the producer was obliged to remove her quietly from the stage.

Another author wrote that Krechetova's was a "purely feminine" nature and that, in every part she played, she not only discovered sympathetic features but brought them into the foreground, "striving to arouse compassion in the hearts of her audience even for such a sinner as Lady Macbeth." In all she played nearly three hundred parts. Three hundred! It was almost beyond imagining. How much spiritual power must be needed to play three hundred parts if only one—true, a silent one, but a good part, nevertheless—had brought me, literally, to the point of losing my mental equilibrium!

No, I had no doubt at all now that one could accomplish something great by devoting one's life to the theatre. Not long before, in the newspaper *Art of the Commune*, I had read that Lenin considered the cinema to be the most important of the arts for us and it began to seem to me that the reflected glory of this name lay upon my secret, which I had mentioned so far to nobody but Andrei.

I had already long since apportioned my day and now I did the same with the night, because the day was not long enough. The morning, when I had to make up and dispatch parcels of books, was devoted to studying school subjects. After lunch I went to school, and in the evening—ah, in the evening the most important thing began! Stealthily, so that no one should see me, I went back to the basement, fastened the heavy iron door, screened the window with a large picture so that nobody could see in from the street, and got down to preparing for the Institute of Screen Art.

This was a very difficult task, especially because the only books about films which I had was the *Cinema—Miracle of the Twentieth Century* series; all the others dealt only with the theatre. The most important thing in preparing for the Institute of Screen Art was mime, and not a word was said about this in any of these books. At last I found what I needed: *A Reader of Exercises in the Expression of Feelings in Speech and Mime*, and from that day onward, my life was secretly split in two, for I began to think over and carry out "exercises."

What were these "exercises" and why were they so important for the future film actress? "Exercises," or "one-actor plays" were, as the *Reader* put it, the surest method whereby one could consciously master the laws governing the language of bodily movements.

The majority of the "exercises" began with the words: "Imagine that. . . ." And I imagined. What didn't I imagine! Now my basement was transformed into the Rostovs' house in *War and Peace* and I into Natasha, awaiting with trepidation Anatoly Kuragin, who was to carry me off. Now the basement remained a basement but I had become Pushkin's Covetous Knight, lighting candles with trembling fingers and opening his coffers one after another. These were exercises taken from literature, but I also made up some good ones myself, from life.

It was cold in the book centre and, from time to time, I would take a run round it, clapping my arms before and behind as cabbies do to get warm. Besides this, I wanted to eat the whole time during that winter, so that sometimes I was even afraid that I was suffering from some unknown disease. But what did such trifles matter, compared with the fantastic transitions from one existence to another, transitions from which that happy feeling of soaring flamed up in my heart ever more and more!

* * *

The time came round when every morning began with a snow-storm but at noon it was already thawing, and the brittle, dark snow vanished before one's eyes—that was how spring began in our Lopakhin.

It was cold at the doctor's and, when I called on him, he told me that it would be better for me to keep my coat on. He also had his on, he had even put it over his head, and a cushion from the divan lay across his knees, which were wrapped in a shawl. But he had a sly look—it amazed me—and his eyes gleamed with child-like cunning from the depths of his overcoat.

We did not get to writing that day. I was late and the doctor had doubtless succeeded already in summarizing his thoughts, because a written-on sheet of paper lay on the table before him.

"Today I've been thinking about my life," he said, looking with a pleased air at the piece of paper; "it's an occupation to which, by the way, I hardly ever give myself up. What about you, Tanya?"

"Quite the contrary, I do it very often."

I settled myself on the little bench and felt that I'd like to go to sleep.

"That's the advantage of being young," Pavel Petrovich went on. "Old people, I assure you, concern themselves much more with the present than with the past. Well then, this is what has occurred to me, Tanya. I've lived not one but several lives, each separated from the others. My youth was the youth of one man, my maturity that of another, my old age that of a third.... Please pass me my magnifying glass."

I gave it to him and he, still with the same cheerful expression, began to examine the page which lay before him. I was interested in this page, but too lazy to get up; it was very comfortable dozing on the bench with my legs drawn up under me and covered with my overcoat.

"I don't remember where it was," Pavel Petrovich went on, "that I read that the well-known poet Rimbaud became a speculator in his latter years, even, I think, a slave-trader, and never wrote anything more. That means there were two lives in him, and the second excluded the first and replaced it completely. But I have had three whole lives," said the doctor, with childish glee, "and for the third of them, I swear, I would give without hesitation both the first and the second."

I thought that to the first of his lives, evidently, belonged the photograph in which the tall, broad-shouldered gentleman, leaning slightly on the railing, was standing above the river; also the other photographs, showing the beautiful lady who liked to be photographed in such a variety of dresses; and that business which Pavel Petrovich rarely talked about—Petersburg University, his work on some scientific translations, his clash with a certain Professor Tsion and participation in a political demonstration, when he was deprived of the right to teach and banished to a small town. His second life—that was at Lopakhin, when, hobbling on his two sticks, he wandered round the house wearing crumpled trousers stuffed into huge galoshes and when, hunched up, he wrote his "work": in a void, in solitude, as though at the bottom of a deep river. And the third? The third had begun after the Revolution, when hope blazed up and burned brightly in his heart, hope that his "work" would be valued as it deserved and would bring benefit to the people.

"The third life—is that what is happening now?" I asked.

"Yes," answered Pavel Petrovich seriously. "It is hope, without which it's very hard not merely to work but even to live. It is studying the part which the protective forces of the organism play in people's lives. It is a discovery which one cannot consider otherwise than as a triumph of materialist science, the appearance of a new field for evolutionary theory."

I was interested to observe that he spoke this phrase up so half-way and then read the rest of it through his magnifying glass from that sheet of paper from which he positively could not tear himself. At last I could hold back no longer, but got up and looked at this page over Pavel Petrovich's shoulder. "Dear Vladimir Ilyich," I read with wonder, "for a long time I could not decide. . . ."

The noise of a cab driving up was heard from the entrance, and a woman's soft, confident voice—which for some reason made my heart beat fast with fear—said to the driver, "Give me my case."

I went on reading the letter, but now I could not follow a word of it.

"Has somebody come?" asked Pavel Petrovich uneasily.

"Yes. Glafira Sergeyevna."

Without haste I looked out of the window and went to open the door, for there was nobody at home but the doctor and myself.

## A DREAM

This had evidently all been thought out earlier, though it seemed odd to me that Agnia Petrovna, whom I met nearly every day, should never once have said a word about the fact that she was moving to Moscow. Of late, however, she had worn a depressed look, had complained of insomnia and had been losing weight. Previously her proud face would change as soon as she removed her pince-nez and revealed her bright, good-natured eyes with their slightly startled expression. Now she seemed startled and outraged even behind her pince-nez. Doubtless Mitya had been proposing to his Mother over a long period to move and come to live with him in Moscow, but she had vacillated, weighed the pros and cons and been unable to make up her mind—for many reasons, one of which was now appearing before me in the shape of a young woman dressed in a fine, blue coat with a fur collar and a sealskin cap with earpieces, carelessly pushed back. . . .

Each time I saw Glafira Sergeyevna she seemed to me unlike the person I had seen previously. But never before had this unlikeness struck me as now. Hardly had she entered the house before she was saying, with a smile, that she had come for Mummy (that was how she spoke of Agnia

Petrovna). I had seen her as a frail young girl, hesitant, with shy gestures which were full of the charm of youth and purity. I had seen her shaken, trying to learn from Fate her sad and terrible fortune. I had seen her silent and broken, walking close to the walls of houses so that she should escape notice as much as possible. Now she came into Lopakhin a confident, imperious woman, polite but with a reluctant smile, while her large eyes remained still and sombre in her beautiful, pale face.

She talked a lot about Mitya, but somehow it seemed that all the time she was talking about herself. It was she alone who had persuaded him to go and take up work in a private hospital (which was well paid) when he had made up his mind to work in a scientific research institute. In brief, to judge by what she said, Mitya would have been lost in the hurly-burly of life in the capital if she had not been there for him to lean on and to bring him to his senses.

"But as to your affairs, Mummy," she said firmly, "I'm carrying out his wishes, and only those."

That meant that Mitya had asked Agnia Petrovna to move to Moscow immediately and to leave Glafira Sergeyevna to dispose of the flat in Lopakhin at her discretion. "Mitya said," "Mitya thinks," "Mitya writes," was heard in almost every sentence she uttered. And Agnia Petrovna, to my amazement, submitted meekly to everything Glafira Sergeyevna asked of her.

I observed with a feeling of bitterness how this woman, who, not very long before, had been businesslike, decisive and proud, knowing how to hold her own with serenity, now fell under another's influence. No doubt she had become tired many years earlier, and had long refused to acknowledge it to herself, and now, in the depths of her heart, she was even grateful to the "young people," who were taking domestic affairs and cares so readily off her shoulders. I think in these few days she made more mistakes than in all the rest of her life. And the biggest of these was that she went away believing Glafira Sergeyevna when she said that Pavel

Petrovich would stay where he was, in his own room, and would go on living as before, looked after by Agasha.

"You've nothing to worry about, Mummy," she said in my hearing. "Mitya said that Uncle must be looked after, and I'll make the best possible arrangements for him, even if I have to stay behind for a day or two."

Agnia Petrovna went away on the morning of February 6th. In the evening when, as usual, I went to call on the old doctor, Agasha, distraught and weeping, called out to me and said that Glafira Sergeyevna was preparing to send him to the Disabled Persons' Home.

On the face of it, this was reasonable enough. Why shouldn't the old man spend the last years of his life in a Disabled Persons' Home? A fine institution had recently been opened in the former residence of the millionaire merchant, Batov. And yet, to send Pavel Petrovich there would be cruel, for he would have to spend his last years (or, perhaps, months) alone, deprived of all he was accustomed to.

This, obviously, never entered Glafira Sergeyevna's head, for she went to the Home and, on her return, said that "everything was arranged" and that "it was very nice there."

She practically ignored me, as a person who had nothing to do with her affairs and who, consequently, did not warrant any of her attention. To Agasha, who had worked for the Lvovs nearly twenty years, she gave notice, and herself took charge of the running of the household. Every day something was carried away from it: she decided to sell the furniture, taking only the upright piano, the crockery and the books to Moscow.

Her sleeves rolled up, a preoccupied and covetous look on her face as she gazed around her, she fetched various articles of lumber down from the loft and examined each one closely. Should she throw it away, take it with her, or sell it? Two huge boxes stood in the middle of the dining-room; in one of them Glafira Sergeyevna stacked books and in the other crockery and, for some reason, I was angry with her for doing it all so cleverly and shrewdly.

"Come on, give me a hand," she said to me one day, using the familiar form and doubtless having forgotten my name.

I looked at her and walked past her. . . .

I knew now whence that childishly exalted state of spirit had sprung in which I had found Pavel Petrovich the day that Glafira Sergeyevna came, and why it did not desert him. Hope had shone in his old eyes when he had commenced to read me the letter which began with the words: "Dear Vladimir Ilyich." Hope had animated him when, stopping his reading half-way through a sentence, he had begun to correct this letter: one moment he did not want it to have a personal character, then it occurred to him that Lenin would not know him, so he must say a few words about himself.

"I have no doubt at all that the Bolsheviks are thinking only of the people's happiness," he wrote, "and that their historical integrity is a real guarantee of the people's welfare. Having served humanity all my life I should be supremely happy if my efforts directed against the harmful forces in nature could make even a very small contribution to your great struggle."

The letter was divided into two parts: theoretical, in which Pavel Petrovich briefly set forth his theory, and practical, in which he proposed the setting-up of the first "Institute of the Protective Forces of Nature" in the world, declaring that "the creation of such an Institute would not only bring indisputable benefit to the Soviet health service but would again set Russian scientific thought in the forefront."

"At the moment when, looking round, one realizes, with trembling spirit, that one stands alone before the judgement of posterity," the letter ended, "it would be gratifying beyond expression to be sure that posterity will readily forgive one's sins, approving one's striving for truth and looking with respect upon one's path of selfless service to the people."

This was the one of many variants which I liked for its simplicity. But Pavel Petrovich went on correcting and rewriting the letter, though it seemed to me that his endless corrections did not improve it. Every evening he would read the letter to me, so that at last I dreamt that I went into Lenin's study and said to him, "Good day, Vladimir Ilyich," and everything happened as simply as it does only in dreams. "You've come for my answer?" Lenin asked me. "Here it is: tell the Old Doctor that he's quite right. Furthermore, I'm going to write to him myself." And he wrote, and I stood behind him and read with excitement. "Dear Pavel Petrovich," I read, almost ceasing to breathe. But already I could hear the noise of a sleigh driving up to the entrance and Glafira Sergeyevna getting out of it, sullen, smiling reluctantly, thinking only of herself, and for some reason trying to change this wonderful dream.... I told Pavel Petrovich about this and he declared, with a laugh, that there was undoubtedly an "affinity of soul" between us: a few days previously he had dreamt that he had finished the letter at last and suddenly saw himself in front of a small, elegant stone building.

"This was evidently my Institute," he said, "because, without thinking, I embellished it, that is, in my mind I ordered it to become still better than it was. The capitals of the columns were grey, like the columns themselves. I thought, 'It would be good if they were white,' and to my amazement they at once became white, and this I saw as clearly as now, Tanya, I see you. The flight of steps was steep and, hardly had it come into my head that I was climbing them with difficulty, than they became gently sloping. In the laboratory, which, by the way, was a very fine one, it was a little dark; I thought of this, and the ceiling rose, the windows became wider and loftier. Everything was realized so splendidly in my dream that I was even ashamed of wanting more...."

Now, however, a few days later, I found Pavel Petrovich in a sort of morbidly drowsy state. It had seemed that nobody could look older than he had looked, but now it turned out that this was possible. He was unkempt, his beard stuck out, the collar of his shirt was not buttoned up, although it was cold in the room, with a draught blowing from the window.

"Pavel Petrovich!"

He didn't recognize me immediately. He slowly lifted his head, which had fallen on his breast, but his glance was still somewhere far away.

I thought I understood what it was that had shaken him so deeply.

"Pavel Petrovich, I went to that Home yesterday. I'll come and see you in the mornings. It's very near the book centre. We'll read aloud and, just as we've been doing, I'll write down what you dictate."

I sat on the little bench and he silently placed a trembling hand on my shoulder.

"To be left here on your own would be still worse, wouldn't it?"

A sort of spasm passed over Pavel Petrovich's face, as though the room were going round before his eyes and he had to stop the room moving in order to hear what I was saying.

"Last night I didn't sleep, I just lay thinking," he said at last. "You know it's a very strange thing, awareness that you can't free yourself from the spirits which you've called forth."

He wasn't raving at all; on the contrary, with every passing moment his head became clearer.

"A painful feeling, that a year or two will pass after a work has appeared, and then your idea will begin to live a life of its own and (who knows?) will follow paths which you didn't foresee." He was silent. "And which you don't approve...."

I realized that he was talking about his theory, that is, saying that, if he died, the theory would not be understood or would be developed in a false direction. My heart ached because I couldn't help him and comfort him, but he wasn't thinking of himself! I could hardly keep my tears back.

"Two opposing laws, it seems, are in conflict at the present time," Pavel Petrovich went on, after a pause. "The law of death, which every day thinks up new methods of killing and destroying, and the law of peace and life, which strives to free man from the calamities that beset him. And I'm happy because I see the stand Russia has taken in this conflict. What do you think, should I write to him about that, too, Tanya?"

"Yes, do, Pavel Petrovich! What were the words you've just said? Would you like me to take them down?"

He shook his head.

"It's too general a thought," he said. "Another time. Now I am writing about the Institute."

It was only then that I noticed an unsealed envelope on the table, lying, as it seemed, apart from and to one side of the periodicals and books, as though it contained something cold and hostile, but about which it was still necessary to think. Pavel Petrovich's glance, tired but calm, rested upon it, and I suddenly realized that this was R.'s answer—the wished-for answer which the old doctor had so much hoped to receive and from which he expected so much!

"Pavel Petrovich ... this letter came today?"

He nodded.

"R. has written to you?"

"No," the old doctor replied.

He hung his head, sighed and was silent such a long time that it frightened me and I gently shook his hand.

"Didn't you know, Tanya?" he said, coming to himself. "R. is dead."

"Oh, no, what are you saying? What do you mean, dead?"

"Yes, yes, it was in yesterday's papers."

And with a trembling hand he held the envelope out to me.

It was an opinion on the manuscript which Pavel Petrovich had dictated to me some time ago. A cold, brutally ironical, destructive opinion. Somebody called Korovin found that, although the writer had devoted his whole life to the study of mould, he was evidently not acquainted with the work of Reinhardt and other outstanding representatives of Western European science. As for his theory, this was treated in the opinion as a childishly silly one, devoid of any scientific sense at all.

"This means nothing. . . ." My voice was lacking in confidence. "And, really, you ought to send your manuscript to Mitya. He will take it to a scientific periodical and then everyone can judge it. Have you talked to Mitya about your theory?"

Pavel Petrovich didn't reply at once. I was sorry that I had asked that question. A shadow passed over his face, but soon it became still brighter than before.

"Yes," he said simply, "I've tried."

The old doctor was lost in thought and we sat for a long time without speaking. Then he spoke again about Mitya, and what I heard surprised me profoundly.

"He's a complicated man," Pavel Petrovich said. "Ambition—and energy, easily roused, only to be extinguished at once. Brilliance of mind and blindness of egoism. Willpower and a strange facility for falling under another person's influence. Sensibility, straightforwardness—and a deep, insuperable gulf between personality and talent."

## SILENCE

Glafira Sergeyevna went off on March 9th and, on the preceding day, they moved the old doctor to the Disabled Persons' Home. This happened in my absence and when, on the evening of the 8th, immediately after the Women's Day meeting, I went, tired but happy, to the "depot," an unknown woman with her skirt tucked up was already washing the floor, the windows were wide open, the wallpaper torn down, and the whole flat as deserted as if not a single living soul had looked into it for a hundred years. I went into the old doctor's room and everything there was deserted and laid waste. Only the harmonium, which was doubtless so decrepit that nobody would buy it, stood in the corner, with my little bench lying beside it, legs in the air.

I wanted to take the bench away, and I would have done so if the woman with the tucked-up skirt had not come after me to ask what I wanted. I wanted nothing, definitely nothing and, of course, it seemed very strange to her that some girl, having entered an empty room, couldn't bring herself to leave but stood for a long time, aimlessly, beside a worn-out, dust-covered musical instrument. Clearly, this girl had not learnt, as that famous film actress had, "when feeling pain to express serenity," for first one tear, then another, and then a third fell upon the harmonium, leaving a track across its dusty lacquered face.

I didn't manage to visit Pavel Petrovich that day; it was late and I wasn't let in. Instead, I went round at ten the following morning. Pavel Petrovich was depressed, had eaten nothing, and lay with his face turned to the wall. A few of his things had been brought over—the arm-chair, the smoking stand and others—but how strange they seemed in this unfamiliar room, how dejected they looked in the corner, how timidly they apologized for their age! The doctor was worried about the trunk containing his papers; during the move it had disappeared. I went to find out what had become of it and discovered that the trunk was to be disinfected—it would be fumigated with sulphur. With some difficulty I managed to convince the superintendent that a scientific work did not need to undergo disinfection. The trunk was brought and placed under his bed and, somewhat appeased, Pavel Petrovich talked with me. But his eyes were dull and I had difficulty in persuading him to sip a glass of tea.

I ran straight from the Disabled Persons' Home to the town Soviet. The chairman, who knew Pavel Petrovich well and liked him, was out, and I ended up by interviewing his deputy, though it involved waiting a very long time and Pavel Petrovich spent nearly the whole day without me. I was distraught and so I gave an extremely incoherent account of what had happened. About Glafira Sergeyevna, however, I spoke coherently. I made her appear a very brisk type, so that the deputy chairman several times made sounds of surprise, and then said that he was beginning to understand some of the mysterious doings on the part of his housing department.

"The parents of this citizen" (he meant Glafira Sergeyevna), "intend to return to Lopakhin. And she has been applying to the housing department for a room for them; that much I know. Well, and here is a fine room available, as regards which it shouldn't be difficult to come to an agreement, provided there's good will on both sides, that is to say, the afore-mentioned citizen and the housing department. Yes. We'll see! And don't worry about Pavel Petrovich. Every cloud has a silver lining. We'll arrange it so that in his new place he'll be better off than at home. I'll go along tomorrow and see to everything personally."

The next day, however, Pavel Petrovich got worse. I saw this, though he didn't complain of anything and even told me that he felt perfectly well. He had had an attack during the night, but it had passed off and he felt splendid now. He made long pauses after each word. "But that," he said, "is only from fatigue after a sleepless night." Dr. Belenky, who knew Pavel Petrovich, readily agreed to come and examine him. After doing this he said that there was "no immediate danger." But Pavel Petrovich laughed heartily, and when I brought him his mixture he poured it away into the spittoon with a trembling but accurate hand.

"No time for that, Tanya," he said gently.

I asked where he was hastening off to and he replied calmly, "It's time to rest."

By evening he had become so bad that he could only indicate with his hand that he wanted me to beat up his pillow. An agonizing impatience had seized him and it was as though he was tortured by his inability to die at once. Now he asked for a drink; then, hardly had I lifted the glass to his lips when he pushed my hand aside; then he tossed about, scattering everything round him, biting the sheet; then he beckoned someone with a feeble hand, but it was not me, for when I bent over him he angrily closed his eyes.

"Time to rest," he repeated again, with a sigh, "time to rest."

* * *

I didn't know that he had asked to be buried without religious rites. There are no flowers in our part of the country at that season, but I broke off a number of cedar branches, and the big wreaths—from the town Soviet, from the district hospital, and from me—looked very beautiful amongst the long, dark-green needles. A lot of people came to the funeral. Pavel Petrovich was known and loved in Lopakhin. It was with this that the chairman of the town Soviet began his speech, in which he gave a brief biography of the old doctor, dwelling particularly on the fact that he had once been exiled to Siberia as a "political." Then an elderly worker from the tannery spoke, a man whom, incidentally, I had never seen at Pavel Petrovich's; probably he was a very old acquaintance from long before the time I came to the "depot."

"It's easy now," he said, "when the Soviet power has introduced free medical aid. But who in the Tsar's day always treated poor people free of charge? Pavel Petrovich!"

Dr. Belenky delivered a heartfelt speech about the old doctor as a scientist. For a few minutes everybody stood in silence after this speech, then dispersed. I remained alone —I wanted to go on to see Mother's grave and, besides, it was necessary to arrange for an inscription for Pavel Petrovich's grave, with the dates of his birth and death.

I don't know where the inmates of the Disabled Persons' Home got the idea that I was his grand-daughter, but even the superintendent himself had not the slightest doubt on this point, for when I went to thank him he told me that I, as Pavel Petrovich's sole relative living in the town, could take away his things, if I liked. And I did take them—the photos, the trunk containing the papers, and the smoking stand. That very same day I began to look through the papers: I wanted to find the letter to Comrade Lenin, the letter which the old doctor regarded as so important! But I found only those various drafts, copied out again and again, a thousand times, with phrases broken off in the middle of a word. I could try to piece them together somehow and make a letter out of them. "But what good would that do?" I thought sadly. "Now Pavel Petrovich will never send it." And, putting all the drafts together in a special folder, I resolved to seek Andrei's advice on the matter.

But there was yet another problem, about which I could not ask anybody, and which lay before me in the form of narrow, old-fashioned envelopes. Krechetova's letters! I wanted very much to read them and probably I wouldn't have hesitated to do so if Pavel Petrovich had not said, "Burn them, Tanya." But that was on the day when Rayevsky showed himself so anxious to obtain and publish them, and was said precisely to prevent that from happening. Pavel Petrovich had not repeated his request; so I sat deep in thought over Krechetova's letters, not able to decide. To burn them? To keep them myself? To give them to Agnia Petrovna or to Andrei? One of the letters fell out, and unintentionally I read a few phrases: "... I don't like writing to you hastily, amid everyday cares. But when you appear before my mind as though you are standing before me, when my rising desire to see you becomes importunate...."

It was as though something alive were in my hands, and I had to throw this throbbing, living thing into the fire! No! But what did it matter? I was now the only person in the world who knew about the old doctor's love.

So, after having thought it over the whole night through, I repacked Krechetova's letters in the morning and put them back in Pavel Petrovich's trunk along with his other papers.

* * *

All through the winter Andrei wrote me interesting, detailed letters. In one of them he asked if I had read Sechenov's *Reflexes of the Brain* and gave a quotation which he had pondered over for several days and which had convinced him at length that it was necessary to live on his own, that is, to move from Mitya's to a hostel. Then came considerations as to whether or not one could exist on 4½ kopeks in gold at the State Bank rate; Andrei declared that one could. Evidently postage stamps were included in this budget, for his next letter came almost a month later.

He liked to describe Moscow and, incidentally, in one letter he recounted the noises of one of the principal streets, the Arbat.

"Imagine that you hear at one and the same time the grating and clanging of trams, the rumbling of drays, the hum of cars, the clattering of horses and the rattling of carriages, the shouts of boys, the cries of news-vendors, the distant but, on holidays, distinct sound of church-bells—and you will form an idea of Moscow so far as its sounds are concerned," he wrote.

In another letter he wrote in detail about Mitya, who had left the private hospital and begun work at a scientific research institute. It was evident that this had not happened easily, for Andrei was a witness of the row that ensued when Mitya told his wife outright that he was going to get out of that "medical stock exchange" even if it meant starving. He didn't have to starve, though. He read a paper at a conference at the People's Commissariat of Health about his work on typhus and was offered an appointment, so that "the Lvov family budget," as Andrei ironically informed me, was doubled.

In his third letter Andrei asserted that I must come to Moscow to study, because this was the city where "the striving for something great assumed the most diverse forms."

In short, these were the letters of a man who had set forth into the future in a cab with the hood thrown back, while I still remained in the porch and gazed after him with hope and sadness in my heart.

Then I received a letter from him in which he wrote a great deal and lovingly about Pavel Petrovich and bitterly reproached himself and me for not having valued and appreciated him. "I remember when as a girl you used to sit at his feet and he made you repeat the multiplication table. When your mother died he wanted to go to see you, and he would have done so if Mother hadn't protested." And there were yet other incomprehensible hints at my ingratitude towards the old doctor—an ingratitude of which Andrei had only recently become aware.

I could hardly control the whirlwind of bitterness, disappointment and resentment which arose in my mind as I read this letter. The simplest thing of all would have been to write to Andrei telling him how Glafira Sergeyevna had hoped to get Pavel Petrovich's room for her parents and had therefore packed him off to the Disabled Persons' Home. But I didn't do that.... Our farewell walk by the Tesma came back to me. "Don't forget!" Had it been necessary to ask me that?

* * *

One day, however, on returning home from school, I found under the door a letter which gladdened and astounded me.

"Natalya Tikhonovna Vlasenkova" was written in big letters on the envelope, and I tore it open with a poignant feeling of contact with someone dear and gone beyond recall. The letter was from Vasily Alexeyevich Bystrov, that friend of Mother's youth about whom she always spoke with slightly exaggerated ardour, as though she feared that I might not believe in the existence of such an irreproachable person. Vasily Alexeyevich wrote that he was now working, not at the Putilov Works, but at the Elektrosila Factory, and that he would be very glad indeed to see his old friend, and her daughter as well, "all the more because I, too, have a daughter of seventeen, the same age as your Tanya. So come and see us soon," he wrote. "You won't recognize our Zastava."

This meant that in Petrograd—which, however brave I pretended to be, seemed to me a cold and haughty city—there would nevertheless be a house where people would receive me kindly, even if only out of respect for Mother's memory. True, Ninochka had invited me to come to her place, and Gury had sworn that the students of *Stumazit* would not let me perish from cold and hunger in the streets of Petrograd. But from Vasily Alexeyevich's letter there breathed forth something "of Mother's," something firm and reliable, and my heart became more joyous....

I find it hard to recall the two or three months that passed between Pavel Petrovich's death and my departure. There must have been a path running from his old heart to much that I cared for in Lopakhin, for now that this path was lost in the snow on Pavskaya Hill everything became meaningless and it was with one thought only—faster, faster!—that I began to get ready for my departure.

So the leaving examination went by: faster, faster!

At the Komsomol District Committee they gave me a document which could be called anything you like: a description, a recommendation, a pass, but which was most of all like an ultimatum, with the demand that I be immediately accepted into the Institute of Screen Art.

I had no shoes. At the District Political Education Office, by a strange coincidence, a raffle was suddenly arranged, for a splendid pair of "Runner" shoes with the fashionable pointed toe-caps. I took two tickets and to my amazement I won the shoes, without which I had been at a loss to know how I would be able to go. Smiling cryptically, they congratulated me. "It's luck," they said. With a lump in my throat I accepted this stroke of "luck."

Maria Petrovna and Nadezhda Petrovna jointly made me a dress—for everyday wear, but one that I shouldn't be ashamed to wear to the theatre or when visiting. Maria Petrovna understood the "theoretical" and Nadezhda Petrovna the "practical" side of this matter. Together they baked me some onion pasties for the journey—I have never eaten anything more delicious than these Lopakhin onion pasties. Together they tried to give me a jar of mushrooms for the journey, and I had difficulty in persuading them that we'd eat these mushrooms in the coming summer, to celebrate my return. Faster, faster!

Every evening my father came to see me (I spent the nights in Maria Petrovna's room) and timidly sat on the edge of the arm-chair. I saw that he wanted to talk to me—about what? For the hundredth time I asked him to take care of the trunk containing the old doctor's papers, and Father promised that in the event of any disaster—fire, earthquake, war—those papers would be saved first and foremost. But what, apparently, was worrying him most of all was buried treasure. Some Amur spirit-trader had told Father before his death where this treasure was to be found: "on the island opposite Innokentevka Stanitsa." So that, if he should find the treasure, to what address should he send me my half? And I suddenly kissed Father and told him the address: "Petrograd, Institute of Screen Art. T. Vlasenkova, future film-star...." He obediently wrote it down. Faster, faster!

One fresh June morning, so early that the starlings, still hardly awake, had only just begun to twitter their disorderly nonsense, I settled myself in a cab with a new trunk, the gift of my school-mates, at my feet. Neighbours and friends were at the gate. My father wept. Faster, faster!

The cab started off. This was the moment I'd waited for so impatiently! Why was I so sad? Why, trying to keep my lips from trembling, did I look round me—at the very old, very familiar houses in the Malaya Mikhailovskaya, on Karl Liebknecht Street and in the Razvyazhskaya? Was it really possible that I wouldn't be seeing them tomorrow?

The horse dragged himself along, the driver was rather aged and only muttered indistinctly in reply to my pleadings. Faster, faster!

## *Chapter III*

## STUDENT YEARS

### THE TEST

I am not going to give a detailed account of how a certain girl, who turned eighteen on the train, made her way to Petrograd, because I'm afraid people wouldn't believe me.

Would you believe, indeed, that, after getting off the train, she sat for a long time on a high stool in the "*Ray-pepo*" bar unable to understand why tram after tram passed her by, in spite of the fact that every time one came along she rushed out with all her belongings, shouting desperately? She soon learnt to wait for trams at the appointed stops. But for a long time she still did not know how to distinguish between the different routes by means of the coloured lights, and she long envied other girls who calmly and, as it seemed, proudly walked through the streets of this huge city without any fear of losing their way.

Would you believe that, when she left her hotel on the first day she arrived, she forgot her address and then ran in confusion along the Ligovka asking at every house whether they had staying with them a person named Vlasenkova, T. P., from Lopakhin, not tall, wearing shoes without galoshes and a leather cap?

Would you believe that that very same evening at least ten young people from the Studio of Mass Spectacles and Pageants, headed by Gury, organized my move to Nina's as a mass-spectacular pageant? Picturesquely draped in a general's greatcoat and cape, which he had bought in the Obvodny market for two rubles forty kopeks, Gury marched at the head of the procession carrying a stick in his hand.

Would you believe that, although there was no stove in Nina's room, we nevertheless punctually paid the housekeeper for service and heating? The service consisted of the housekeeper, a healthy, ruddy-faced woman, talking to us from morning till night about her ailments, and the heating amounted to her bringing us a steam iron from time to time. Still, we always went about in well-ironed dresses.

At the Institute of Screen Art in Chaikovsky Street I obtained the syllabus of tests for admission, and was delighted to learn at the office that nothing else but talent was needed for entry to this Institute. Nina liked my "exercises" very much, but she considered my gait too ordinary for films, and advised me to take some lessons in eurhythmics, so that I might move more glidingly. This was excellent advice, especially as a well-known eurhythmics expert lived in Liebknecht Street, not far from Nina's. I had to pawn something to raise the money to take three lessons from her, but, as a result of them, I began to walk glidingly, that is to say, "carrying the foot low over the floor, resting the weight first on the toe and then on the heel." What emerged from this was something like a heron's walk, but the eurhythmics expert said that she fully approved of this comparison, because a heron was a thousand times more eurhythmic than a human being.

I thought about my feelings and was cast into despair, for it seemed to me that for a future film actress my feelings were too petty.

I stirred myself up with imaginary spiritual agonies. This was very difficult for me, because the agonies didn't find themselves at home in my heart, and in spite of all efforts to the contrary I invariably thought that everything would come out all right in the end.

It was my appearance that worried me most of all. Absolutely everybody, however—Ninochka, Gury, Volodya Lukashevich—assured me that I was "photogenic."

"Provided one thing, though," said Gury meaningly, "that your contrast—fair hair and dark eyes—shows up on the screen...."

The evening before the test Ninochka said that I should rest, so I went to the Elektrosila Factory to look for Mother's friend Vasily Alexeyevich Bystrov. I did not have to look long, however, for the first passer-by whom I stopped on getting off the tram at the factory said that Vasily Alexeyevich would be in the pattern shop or even (here he looked at his watch) at the district Soviet. When, a few minutes later, I asked the very same question of one of the workers in the factory yard, he also looked at his watch before answering me. One got the impression, in fact, that everybody in the district knew what Vasily Alexeyevich was doing at three o'clock and at four o'clock. For some reason I didn't like this, and it was with a sudden sense of foreboding that I made my way to the technical building which the worker had pointed out to me. This was a commonplace, old-fashioned sort of building, but when, having passed through its dark entrance-hall, I pushed open one of the heavy doors, at random, I was dumbfounded: an enormous workshop lay before me, with a black floor on which men wearing greasy clothes were doing something with machines. I had been inside Lopakhin tannery, but it was quite impossible to compare that with this high, sombre hall, with steel cranes moving to and fro above it, and people at the far end looking as small as though seen through the wrong end of binoculars!

I came upon Vasily Alexeyevich in a crowd of preoccupied people who were standing silent at the edge of a rather deep pit, in which a round object, like a gigantic top, was spinning, gleaming dully. Vasily Alexeyevich was an elderly, narrow-shouldered man, in a cap and spectacles, with a beard which was turning grey—nothing like the Vasily Alexeyevich described in Mother's stories.

"Vasily Alexeyevich, I'm Tanya Vlasenkova," I began, not very confidently. He turned towards me. "How do you do."

"How do you do."

"I've come from Lopakhin. Mother wrote to you, and I...."

He listened to me without taking his eyes off the pit, in which nothing interesting was happening as far as I could see, and, when I finished, said, absently:

"Yes, yes, I'm very glad .... But you must meet Lena."

I had been on the point of telling him how often Mother had spoken of him and how much she had wanted to visit Petrograd now, after the Revolution: instead, he was sending me off to meet some Lena.

"Who is Lena?"

"My daughter," replied Vasily Alexeyevich. "Do you know our address?"

"No."

"No. 21 Mezhdunarodny Avenue, flat number four. Go and call on her, she'll be at home now."

Then he asked where I was staying and after I had answered I stood by him for two or three minutes more, which were particularly distressing ones because it seemed that he was only waiting for me to leave as quickly as possible, while I couldn't believe that this meeting with "somebody of Mother's," from which I had expected so much, would end like this. At last I muttered:

"Good-bye for now."

He replied, "Good-bye," and, depressed and hurt, I went back home.

Nina pestered me with questions, but I answered her coldly that Mother must have simply made a mistake, because there was nobody called Bystrov at the Elektrosila Factory, and never had been.

Of course, it never entered my head that the gigantic top, from which Vasily Alexeyevich couldn't tear his eyes away while he was talking to me, was the first rotor (revolving part) of the Volkhovstroi project turbine, and the entire country was looking at that rotor, along with him, with love and hope.

* * *

While perhaps I can hardly call self-confidence a characteristic of mine, yet, as I made my way next day to the Institute of Screen Art, I was firmly convinced that the test would go off splendidly. This confidence was transformed into a wonderful, strong serenity when a little woman with a small, grey, fluffy head asked me to perform an exercise very similar to one which I had found in the *Reader* and often acted at home.

"Imagine that you are coming into a room . . ." she said.

According to the *Reader* one was supposed to break each exercise down into "motives." I had little time, but I divided this exercise up and even rapidly ran through each "motive" in my head.

"Well, go on," said the woman with the fluffy hair.

I wasn't the least bit afraid of her. By her side, however, sat a tall, sturdily built man with hair combed back and a fat nose, looking something like a well-dressed cab-driver. Later I learnt that he was a famous film producer. Of him I was scared.

On the whole I performed the exercise very well, though at one point I forgot to smile bitterly and at another I sighed poorly. Yet the film producer laughed for some reason or other the moment I appeared before the examiners' table, and the fluffy-haired woman pursed her lips in a queer way, in spite of the fact that I moved according to the rules of eurhythmics, that is to say, stepping first on the toe and then on the heel.

"Do you think it's enough?"

"Certainly," said the film producer.

With a joyous feeling that it was almost impossible for anyone to have come through a test better, I ran off to see Nina at the Conservatoire, then, after lunch, found something to busy myself with.

That evening we went to the theatre with Gury and Volodya Lukashevich, and, returning home in the white night, I felt for the first time what a beautiful place Petrograd was. Until then I had had no time to think about it. Now, however, when I could hardly doubt that I would be accepted for the Institute, when those worries over eurhythmics lessons and imagined agonies were over—now I appreciated anew that I was in Petrograd. Could it really be me standing with the boys on that wonderful embankment, and talking and laughing? Was it possible that I was not in Lopakhin but in Petrograd? Could all this really be true—the huge, arched bridge, as wide as our Razvyazhskaya Street; the Neva, compared with which our Tesma really did seem like a "strip of tape"?* The bridge was raised, vessels passed through, and we sat for a long time on the parapet. Eventually the bridge was lowered, but we still did not want to leave; we gazed and gazed at the Neva, admiring its grey-green tints.

The next day I had to present myself for the general education test, and I did so, but for some reason I couldn't find my name on the list of those who had passed in the special subject, that is, the exercises. This was clearly a mistake, and the girls who had come along with me for the examination also said that undoubtedly it was a mistake. I went to verify the point, but the office was closed; only the producer I had seen the day before stood at a table, idly turning over the pages of some book. I greeted him, and asked him if he knew why I was not on the list of those who had passed in exercises. He looked up from his book and stared at me.

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* *Tesma* in Russian.

"Ah, yes," he said, remembering. "You're the one who walked in such a peculiar way at the examination, aren't you?"

I said something incoherent, probably:

"How do you mean, in a peculiar way?"

"I'm not going to explain that," the producer replied, good-humouredly. "You're not on the list because you didn't pass in exercises."

I must have gone pale and even staggered, for he took a step towards me to give me support. But it was only for a moment, then I pulled myself together and we had a conversation—not a long one, only ten minutes or so.

He said that he had worked in the theatre for many years and often met people who were a long way from being actors but it was the first time that he had met anybody so far from it as I.

"Believe me, I'm telling you for your own good," he said. "You can be an engineer, a mathematician, a teacher—whatever you like. But you will never be an actress—not even a very bad one."

I thanked him and left.

My face turned to the wall, I lay the whole day ignoring Nina, who assured me that nothing out of the ordinary had happened, especially as Gury would manage to fix me up with a course in speech-training and that, too, would be useful for me, as they were already writing about sound films. I asked her to go to the Institute to fetch my papers, and, to be frank, cried a little when I was left alone.

How had it come about that, from childhood, I had been determined to become a doctor, and then suddenly imagined that I had theatrical talent? When had that eclipse occurred, when had that fog arisen in which I had lost my way? No theatrical experts had seen me on the stage, and nobody except my friends had said that I played my part well—a part in which I did not utter a single word! I had mistaken love of the theatre for acting talent—what a childish, ridiculous mistake!

These reflections must at last have tired me out, for I went off to sleep, and when I woke up I saw beside Nina a girl I didn't know, pale, with widely set eyes, not beautiful but with a pleasant face.

"I—I'm Lena Bystrova," she said, when she noticed that I had awakened. "I've been looking for you all day. My father sent me to fetch you."

She stopped speaking and sat down beside me on my bed.

"Well, why are you silent? I don't see that it matters much that you've failed. In fact, I think it's even wonderful. The Institute of Screen Art, indeed! What you need is a real higher education—that's what! And if you've got talent, do you think it won't show itself? What was Chekhov by training? A doctor! And did medicine hinder him? There was a composer (I've forgotten his name, I think it was Borodin) who was a chemist, and Sechenov—you know, the famous one—what was he to begin with? An ordinary military engineer! You know, I hesitated for a long time, too, especially because all my friends were against it and only my father was in favour, and he only because I coaxed him. I chose medicine. And do you know I advise you to do the same thing. What were you interested in at school—nature or history? I'm generalizing, of course, but I think you know what I mean. If it was nature, go for medicine. You won't be wrong."

I listened, but said nothing.

And suddenly, as though day-dreaming, I saw the old doctor sitting under the flowering chestnut-tree, resting his small vigorously-clenched hands on his knees.

It could not be true, but I not only saw Pavel Petrovich distinctly, I heard his voice as he spoke about something with childlike confidence. I remembered myself, or rather, not myself, but what I had felt when I used to sit on the little bench at his feet and tried to understand why a twilight glow of triumph would suddenly break over his face the moment he referred to those invisible microbes of his.

It was not easy to put aside, even if only temporarily, the fulfilment of a cherished aspiration, and to cross to another path, along which I plodded slowly, looking over my shoulder and stumbling as I went. A bitter feeling of uncertainty, a feeling which I did not like to admit, stayed with me for a very long time. This feeling was intensified when I entered into the life of the medical institute, and into the midst of a host of concerns, worries and impressions. It was a life full of complex relationships, public and private, criss-crossing influences and undecided questions, compared with which the questions that had worried the Lopakhin Komsomols seemed naïve. In short, it was a life which did not in the least take into account the regrettable fact that one among the thousands of students had dreamed of becoming an actress and had failed the tests of the Institute of Screen Art.

Today the First Leningrad Medical Institute, named after Academician Pavlov, is a very different place from the Medical Institute where I studied in the 1920's. The department where I studied is now almost twice as big, and the Institute has been linked with a large hospital and a polyclinic through which over two thousand patients pass every day. Indeed, nowadays everything is reckoned in thousands in this great Institute; the number of students, the number of places in the hostel, the number of beds, and so on.

I had a strange feeling as I wandered, since the war, through the spacious grounds of the Institute, which has been expanded both in width and depth, recognizing the old and being astonished by the new, and trying vainly to go back in my mind to the sources of that noisy, youthful life which now pours so confidently through clinics and laboratories.

Yes, it is a whole town now, with asphalt streets, gardens and squares! In the years when I was studying there, however, there was only one big building, with a number of smaller ones adjoining. Much has changed; the students work in a different way and they do not seem to be so deeply concerned with the administration of the Institute as they were in the early 1920's. The famous "brigade method" has long been abolished, and, along with it, the "subjects commissions" which used to supervise absolutely everything, beginning with the menu in the Institute dining-room and ending with the selection of teachers for the most important departments.

But the main and startling difference struck me when, looking at the young, lively faces of the students and listening to their conversations and arguments, I imagined in their place the oddly-assorted, poorly-dressed, care-ridden crowd of students who were at the Institute in my time.

They were people of various ages and even of different generations: there were medical students who had gone off to the Civil War and returned to the Institute after this interval (some of them had children who played in the yard while Mother studied), and young people who had just finished secondary school. There were feldshers, elderly people who had dreamt all their lives of higher education and had now given up their established positions in villages in the Ukraine, Siberia or the Urals for the precarious, insecure student life of those years. There were children of the intelligentsia and, predominantly, children from peasants' and workers' families: in short, people so various that sometimes it seemed extraordinary—what miracle could have brought them together in one lecture room or laboratory, in one room in a students' hostel? This miracle was called the Revolution, which had awakened an unusually powerful thirst for knowledge.

Nearly all the students had jobs, and this certainly did not make things easy for them. They were busy at the Institute from nine to five, and then, in the evening, sometimes all through the night, they betook themselves to the port, to the fuel dumps or to the ambulance service. It was hard for them to manage, however, on their very small stipends, and our student *artel,* which made laces and ink, somehow did not grow into a "mighty industrial enterprise," as our newspaper *Risus Sardonicus* humorously called it.

During the whole of my first year I lived with Nina, and I think it can only have been because we never had a moment free that we didn't freeze in that room, heated only by the steam iron.

Nina was studying at the Conservatoire, and also belonged to the fire service there, so that she often had to stay for night duty. And I—what didn't I do! Gury got me some work at the "Beacon" Publishers: for a new calendar appropriate anti-religious quotations in verse and prose had to be found for every feast-day, names to be thought up and so on.

I was sorry he didn't get me the whole calendar, but only the end of February and half of April. Anti-religious quotations were few, and I proposed to substitute for them quotations on natural science, explaining some of the phenomena of nature—thunder, lightning, and such like.

These "quotations" I wrote myself, consulting with ease, to my own amazement, books which quite recently had still seemed very difficult. The old doctor's lectures had evidently not fallen on stony ground.

Now I had handed in my calendar and was employed at the exhibition of the works of T., a famous artist of that period. A canvas of his hung on the wall in the empty hall of the Academy of Arts—a huge spiral into which were inserted three geometrical figures: a globe, a cube and a prism. According to the ideas of the artist, who was there to explain, all three figures must continually revolve together, for in the globe dwelt the universe, in the cube the solar system, and in the prism the earth. I remembered these explanations so well because I sat in this large, empty, cold room every day from 12 till 6. You could scarcely imagine anybody wanting to steal such a work, but, fortunately, this did not occur to the organizers of the exhibition. I say fortunately, because for my six hours of duty they paid me ten millions, or one gold ruble at the State Bank rate. Among the other works by this artist exhibited here was an ordinary board, painted a dirty pink colour. This board was also considered a picture, and beside it, arguing heatedly, stopped dishevelled young men in long velvet jackets.

So passed a whole winter, and I somehow not only succeeded in working and in getting through my studies at the Institute, but also in going to the theatre, and that quite often. Nina and I used to go to a little theatre by the Neva where only very terrifying plays were put on, so that we shuddered the whole evening, and later Nina couldn't sleep and got into bed with me and we both shivered, scolding each other for it.

## FIRST YEARS

Why do the first years of my life as a student appear in my mind somewhat like stills from a film? Separate, disconnected frames pass before me. This disconnectedness, however, is only apparent; at a depth which I can reach only with difficulty one and the same idea runs through them all, the idea which vaguely came to me when, while listening to Lena Bystrova's arguments, I suddenly saw before me the old doctor sitting under the flowering chestnut-tree, in the light of the setting sun.

I see myself coming into a room where corpses are lying on stone tables—men and women, old people and children. Around them are students chatting, studying, joking together, and I am chatting and laughing and eating like the rest, though I can hardly fight down the nausea rising in my throat. Like the others I am smoking so as to get rid of the smell of formalin which pursues me into the canteen, in the street, at home. It's frightful, but I stick a scalpel into the waxen, puppet-like, obedient body of a woman, "She won't wake up, she's dead!" Who was she, whence came she? What was she called? What did she die of? Had she any relatives?

That was my first day in the anatomy theatre.

There I am at a meeting of the Komsomol cell, giving my life history, and a stipend of 25 rubles is awarded to me by an overwhelming majority of votes.

I was very fond of evening parties in my first year, the kind that in your fifth year you recall with astonishment. Was it really I who had worried, carrying a gramophone from a house in one part of the city and records from a house in another; so upset that it wasn't possible to dance in our little room; so angry with Lela Sopikova because she had a splendid flat in Zagorodny Avenue?

There I am, preparing a speech for the District Conference of Women Activists, and re-reading Lenin's speech to the Third Congress of the Komsomol—and there, united into a single whole, are the tens and hundreds of scattered facts of which my life consists, and Gury's and Lena Bystrova's, the life of all that generation which "will see communist society and will itself build that society."

"... You are faced with the task of construction, and you can cope with it only by mastering all modern knowledge, only if you are able to transform communism from ready-made, memorized formulas, counsels, recipes, prescriptions and programmes into that living thing which unites your immediate work, and only if you are able to transform communism into a guide for your practical work." The night at the Pustynka comes back to me.... So that's what's meant by "achieving something great in the name of the people and for their good." It means giving all one's strength, mind and will to the building of communism. The day when what I do will win its way into thousands and millions of hearts appears to me in a new light.

But life goes on, day after day, month after month. It's a great pity, but it becomes clear that I don't know any physics, in spite of my having received a "satisfactory" at the school-leaving examinations. It seems that there exists a subject known as chemistry, which for some reason had found no place in our school syllabus, and when studying it I am filled with a despairing feeling that nowhere could you find a bigger dunce than I am.

The anatomy lecturer claimed that there was nothing worse than cramming and that the main thing in his science was system. Successfully combining these concepts, I systematically cram anatomy—in trams, at meetings, at the art exhibition, and I cram, at last, to such a point that involuntarily I begin to think about every movement, whether my own or another person's, from the anatomical standpoint. . . .

And life goes on, day after day, month after month. I listen to lectures, compile summaries, cram at nights, worry before sessions. And suddenly everything stops, flees from my sight, fades away. . . .

One wintry day in January, 1924, millions of people make their way under mourning banners to Mars Field. There is a hushed, anxious hum of voices. The people's faces look thin, their mouths firmly drawn, their eyes hollow. "Comrade Lenin is dead." Silence. . . . A woman's suppressed sobs are barely audible.

I remember the old doctor's letter beginning with the words: "Dear Vladimir Ilyich."

"Having served humanity all my life," he wrote, "I should be supremely happy if my efforts directed against the harmful forces in nature could make even a very small contribution to your great struggle."

Dimly the snow gleams amid the dull, unglittering hoarfrost. It is the granite wall of the graves on Mars Field.

"I have no doubt at all that the Bolsheviks are thinking only of the people's happiness, and that their historical integrity is a real guarantee of the people's welfare."

The factory whistles sound their mourning salute. Voices speak quietly of the sorrow which is common to all, young and old, men and women, people of all nations and trades. A little red sun standing motionless in the foggy, frosty sky, and tears, and youthful vows to be true to him who proved that it was in our power, and in mine, to transform life and make it happy and beautiful.

* * *

I said that the "stills" of my first years as a student only seemed disconnected, but in fact it was no accident that those particular episodes have been preserved in my memory and not dozens and hundreds of others. Yes, perhaps it is so. Yet the main reason why they are incomplete and disconnected is that after my failure at the Institute of Screen Art I went for a long time without feeling that enthusiasm which lights up everything around one, making every detail of life memorable and distinctly clear. This period came to an end when, during my second year at the Institute, I attended Professor Zaozersky's lectures.

He lectured on microbiology, and his first lecture was a sort of introduction to the subject—but how much that word fails to convey! It consisted of vivid scenes from the history of science which he drew for us, like a magician, with a single phrase and one vigorous gesture of his plump little hand. Thus there appeared before us the plague-stricken London of 1665, with hordes of rats living in deserted houses, white crosses on the doors, bonfires at the crossroads, every night endless files of carts carrying away corpses, and crowds of silent townspeople outside the Royal Palace (for it was believed that the King's touch could expel the disease from the sufferer). He read a report which was published in *The Intelligencer*: "This is to give notice that His Majesty hath declared his positive intention not to heal any more after the end of this present April until Michaelmas next. And this is published to the end that all persons concerned may take notice thereof and not receive a disappointment."

I had seen a thousand times the wooden discs on the ropes which fasten boats to landing-stages, but only now, when I heard Zaozersky's lectures, did I realize that these discs were there to prevent plague-rats from reaching the shore.

He told us that when Edward Jenner discovered a method of inoculation against smallpox (vaccination), his opponents founded a special periodical in which, by distorting facts, they tried to discredit this inoculation. The struggle was carried into Parliament, where honourable gentlemen produced quotations from the Bible to show that vaccination was a criminal and shameful thing. Inoculation with cowpox, they asserted, might change a human being into a cow.

"That was 120 years ago," said Zaozersky. "But the struggle goes on. In Britain to this day there is still no vaccination law. More! Yesterday I read in the *Courier of Contemporary Medicine* that the British Ministry of Health last year recorded several hundred cases of natural smallpox. So," Zaozersky added ironically, "one cannot say that the efforts of Jenner's adversaries remained entirely unsuccessful."

I don't recall how he passed on from that point to Mechnikov. I remember only the stir of interest which ran through the lecture-hall when he mentioned that he knew Mechnikov well and had worked under him at the Odessa bacteriological station in the 1880's. A gay expression played over his face immediately he mentioned this great name, and his broad historical "oil paintings" were succeeded by miniatures, exact as though in relief, which he began to show us quickly, one after another.

We see the nine-year-old boy reading a lecture to his brothers and paying them two kopeks each to hear it through to the end; but the brothers generously refuse to take their fee. As a sixteen-year-old *gymnasium* boy he gets his first review published and the eighteen-year-old student his first scientific work. Then Mechnikov decides to complete a four-year University course in two years and completes it even sooner, in one and a half years. As a young man of twenty he lectures on his researches to a congress of zoologists in Germany and at twenty-two returns to Russia and receives the first Baer Prize.

Three more years pass and the Professor is giving his first lecture in a crowded lecture-hall in Odessa University.

"Let's add yet one more to these remarkable figures," says Zaozersky, with a smile. "He wasn't thirty when his works had won world fame. What were these works of his? He was a zoologist. Then why does his name hold first place in Russian and world microbiology? It would be beyond my powers to tell of all that this man did, studying questions of the origin and development of the lowest order of animals, the mechanisms which defend the organism against microbes, natural history and the causes of premature old age in human beings. I shall dwell only upon one brilliant page of his biography. I shall tell you about his great discovery of phagocytosis. . . ."

Olya Tropinina, a friend of mine at the Institute, said that Nikolai Vasilyevich Zaozersky's lectures were to his printed course as a magnificent performance of some symphony is to its written score. How cold indeed appear the words: "1882. Italy. Wonderful setting of the Messina coast. Mechnikov alone, his family gone to the circus. Doesn't take his tired eyes from the microscope. Observes life of wandering cells in larva of a starfish. . . ." And what profundity, what picturesqueness Zaozersky gave them, so that the listener could not help sensing behind these words the birth of an idea of genius!

"What if those wandering cells served to oppose any 'harmful agents' which might make their way into the organism?" he asked, in such a lively way that I wanted to answer him. "What if he were to introduce an infection into the transparent body of the larva? Would not those cells surround it, if they really were striving to defend the organism? And going out of his house, Mechnikov broke off a thorn from a rose bush and carefully inserted it under the skin of the larva." Zaozersky was silent and then said thoughtfully, in Ukrainian, "Yes, that was an event."

Everybody chuckled, including him.

"Now, I ask you, my friends," he went on. "What, in your opinion, is the most important thing in a scientific experiment? You can't answer that question because you're only children yet. Waiting! You must know how to wait. You must be able to conquer the agonizing impatience that doesn't leave you day or night and rises to a white heat, crushing all other thoughts and feelings. Without any doubt, Mechnikov felt it on that night of nights. Early in the morning he rushed to the microscope. Success!" said Zaozersky, joyfully, in such a voice as though it had been his own success. "The thorn was completely surrounded by the wandering cells. Thus was born the theory—no, the first idea which lay at the basis of the theory. This idea was followed by another. What happens if a finger, for instance, gets a splinter in it? The skin reddens, pus appears, and what doctors call inflammation begins. But what is this pus if not those wandering cells, the white corpuscles of the blood, striving towards the affected place? Doesn't this mean that inflammation is a defensive, healthy reaction of the organism? Doesn't this mean that redness, heat, and pain are only symptoms of the struggle which the leucocytes are waging against the microbes? Thus the zoologist entered the world of the doctors, which was living on its traditions and its laws and which received his 'fantastic' proposition with hostility. So began a struggle, long, stubborn, full of tragic collisions, a struggle which lasted a quarter of a century...."

I had a lump in my throat, and little stars of joy and happiness ran up my spine. Behind me somebody was whispering. I turned round. A student I didn't know, puffing and grimacing, was writing a note to pretty Masha Kolomeitseva, my room-mate. Everybody at the Institute wondered why Masha had chosen to go to a medical institute and not to some other one. She was sitting there all red, having difficulty in keeping back her laughter. She wasn't listening to Zaozersky: that astonished me! Still, this scene only passed rapidly before me and disappeared in an instant from my consciousness.

The stout, slightly stooping, elderly man with the grey beard, with the quick, light gestures of his little hands, walked up and down the lecture-hall and spoke of undiscovered secrets of nature.

"A road of scientific work stretching to infinity lies before thinking mankind. The way lies through doubt and searching. And yet what moments of glory there are for a man who, as a result of his agonizing labours and researches, finds even one grain of a general truth which explains a hitherto unsolved secret of nature! We have talked today about great minds of the past, who went forward in the days when millions were stumbling in impenetrable darkness. Judge for yourselves what a proud task awaits those who set out to turn science to face these millions. . . ."

* * *

Soon our practical studies in microbiology began. Zaozersky's assistants taught us how to use the microscope, how to stain microbes, and so forth, and I felt as though I were entering Pavel Petrovich's private world by the back door—I had got inside and was standing in the "kitchen," looking around me with curiosity. Now that subject was finished, but I still felt that I hadn't moved a step out of the "kitchen." I only felt that my sudden confidence that there was nothing in the world more interesting than microbiology would lead me forward and help me to find my way amongst a mass of conflicting impressions, an odd liking for some subjects and a still odder dislike of others—amidst everything which made up my first year at the Medical Institute.

* * *

Early in winter, 1925. The morning after a sleepless night during which I had thought over every word I was going to say. The microbiology department. Nikolai Vasilyevich's woman assistant, whom I had decided to approach just because she was a woman and "a woman doesn't refuse a woman."

"I'm interested in microbiology. Please, let me work with you."

The tall, handsome woman looked down at me, smiling ironically.

"All right, I'll speak to the Professor. But it's hardly likely he'll allow it: we haven't a single vacancy."

A long pause. The assistant said no more. I left the laboratory in which we had been talking. But for some reason I didn't want to leave the department building. In a surprisingly light-hearted mood I wandered through the corridors, glancing into one workroom after another. In a state of desperate resolution bordering on complete recklessness I went down to the hall and, having asked the care-taker when the Professor would be coming, made my way with measured but light steps straight to his study.

Not a soul about! But a servant must have just brought a carafe of water and gone out, for the water was still moving in the carafe and the reflections of the light from the moving water rocked to and fro noiselessly, obediently, from the wall to the carpet and up to the door-curtain behind which I stood scarcely daring to breathe.

The Professor entered; it was easy to recognize him by the sound of his breathing, the rustling of his footsteps and in general by a sort of good-natured noise which was characteristic of him alone. His colleagues came and went; the handsome, smart woman assistant swept past so close to me that I felt the movement of air from her swinging dress. The reflections were still moving to and fro, but over a steadily decreasing arc; another minute and they would stop—and then something would happen, I didn't know what, but my heart, expecting it, began to thump slowly and loudly. Something terrifying was taking place. I heard the Professor get up and unhurriedly lock the door. Then, whistling, he came straight towards me. He seized me by the hand and pulled me out from behind the door-curtain.

"Well, madam?"

I know that I wanted to say, "Professor, I've been interested in microbiology since I was a child. Please allow me to work in your department."

Instead of these convincing, long-since memorized words, however, I said:

"Er-er-er."

"What does that mean?"

For the first but far from the last time I heard Zaozersky laugh, and what a good-natured, deafening laugh it was!

All my life I've remembered that conversation, in which I answered only "yes" or "no" to the most important questions ever asked me.

"Do you clearly appreciate what lies ahead of you? Perhaps you think that scientific research is an easy thing? Madam, it means years of labour, selfless and unregarded! What am I saying, years—one's whole life! It means despair when suddenly you're convinced that dozens of experiments have been in vain. When another scientist draws a conclusion from these experiments which you had overlooked. You imagine, for example, that you know how to think?"

"Yes."

"I doubt it."

He looked at me attentively, kindly, shrewdly.

"To think means stubbornly to investigate a subject, to approach it first from one angle and then from another, to assemble all the arguments in favour of this or that opinion about it, to deal with objections, to recognize gaps where they exist and to show that they are not there where others find them. Can you do that?"

"No."

"And you want to take up scientific research? And won't you get married? How old are you—twenty? After two, or at the most three years, all the science in the world will seem to you mere rubbish compared to the way you feel about somebody you love."

"No, no!"

He smiled, tugged his beard; he was pleased.

"Well, what about it? It's a bargain, then?"

"Yes, yes."

And Zaozersky offered me a choice of two subjects for an essay, guessing, no doubt, that I knew just as little about "immunization against diphtheria with anatoxin" as about "the epidemiology of malaria."

* * *

I don't remember where or when it was that I learned that until Nikolai Vasilyevich's time there was not a single department of bacteriology in Russia, that to begin with he had to work in one room and the entire establishment consisted of the Professor and one servant. The Professor prepared the material and glassware for practical work with his own hands.

Now there was a large, two-storeyed building, through which a stout man with a greying beard and shrewd, youthful eyes walked, smiling and whistling "The Broad Dnieper is Groaning and Roaring," a popular Ukrainian song.

For twenty-five years (his jubilee was celebrated when I was in my second year) he had been at the head of the department, and this had not prevented him from leading some very substantial expeditions against plague and cholera. He had been in Arabia, Manchuria, Persia, India, Mongolia and China. A number of photographs had been published in the *Niva* of 1895 depicting Zaozersky's expedition to China to combat plague; amongst them was a very odd one, showing a mandarin ceremonially handing over a Chinese baby to the Russian doctor. Nikolai Vasilyevich had found this Chinese baby in a village dying of plague. He brought the baby to Petersburg and adopted him; and now from time to time one could meet in the department an amiable young Chinese who, to Nikolai Vasilyevich's sorrow, showed not the slightest interest in microbiology but instead did wonderful things on the lathe.

What more shall I tell you about my Nikolai Vasilyevich? That this famous scientist never had a kopek—not because he was badly paid but because he spent, lent or simply gave away his money in an extraordinarily easy-going way. That he was a Ukrainian from a poor-peasant family, and kept up correspondence with the people of his village throughout his life; not without reason did Academician Omelyansky write later on that "the name of Zaozersky is as well known to every Chinese doctor as to every peasant in Chebotarka village." That, as a young man, he had swallowed cholera vibrios, the onlookers being amazed at the coolness with which he carried out this risky experiment. In short, his was a wonderful and instructive life, full of remarkable happenings.

As for Nikolai Vasilyevich's lectures, his well-known printed course gives but a pale representation of them. And how can one put on paper the sincerity, the inspiration behind which one always felt his confident clarity in his work.

This was a man whom his students didn't merely love, they adored him. For his part, he always worked listening to the sound of young voices. Not without reason was his department the most popular one in the Institute!

## THREE HOMES

You are thinking, perhaps, that I was interested in nothing but science during my student years? It is true that, from the day when I fell in love with microbiology, life became much more interesting than before, because once again I had in my heart a "main thing" to which I listened all the time, as a musician tuning his instrument listens to the tuning fork. But that doesn't mean that I lived at all differently from other students. Like the others I attended lectures, and did my practical work, and then there were the department, social work and thousands of other things, hurrying by week after week at such speed that I very well remember how surprised I was to meet each new season as it came round. What, spring already? Why, it was autumn only a moment ago! During the winter we went on our rest-days to Yukka. And how good those toboggan rides were, amid the white, shaggy trees, and that wonderful feeling of fatigue, youth and health when, on returning home, you lie down, close your eyes, and at once the white, sparkling snow and the blue sky arise before you with startling clearness!

During my second year I moved to the hostel in Lev Tolstoi Street. My neighbours (the room was for four) changed every year, but I remained, and so there passed before my eyes at least ten girls, some clever and some not very clever, sloppy ones and neat ones, noisy ones and quiet ones. Amongst them was Vera Klimova, a quiet, plain girl, a real doctor by vocation, whose ability to win patients' confidence could be seen from the very first days of her clinical work. And there were also some who dreamt only of marrying well, girls like Masha Kolomeitseva, about whom you couldn't help wondering why they had chosen a medical institute rather than any other for this purpose. All these girls, however, infinitely various as they were in development, inclinations and tastes, had one thing in common: but for the Revolution not one of them would have been studying at an institute of higher education. Some were clearly aware of this indubitable fact and valued it highly, others not very much. But it was more or less typical of that new student body which grew in numbers year by year.

I had made friends with Olya Tropinina already in my first year. We hardly knew each other when, at a meeting of the subjects commission, she passed me a note: "In the speaker's opinion there's a wall between the intelligentsia and the Komsomol. Let's show it's not true." She was a lively and clever girl who was subject to sudden fits of depression without any apparent cause. She knew two languages well, English and German, she answered freely at the examinations and wrote easily without lingering over every phrase, as I did. Later, when I undertook my first independent work, I realized from Olya Tropinina's example how important it was to know languages, physics and chemistry, and to be able to write easily and coherently—in brief, to have been to a good school. It was then that my school years appeared to me in a completely new light. And more than once I caught myself sighing bitterly when I thought how much precious time had been spent in vain.

There was a reserve, which I also liked very much, in my relations with Olya: for instance, we hardly ever talked about personal matters. One day, though, she said that she would not marry, and when I asked with surprise "Why not?" she replied that her mother had died not long before, and she had promised herself not to leave her father.

Olya had a pale, beautiful face with black, liquid eyes and thick black hair which she wore in a braid wound twice round her small, graceful head. Looking at her I often thought how difficult it would be for her to keep her word....

Altogether, my closest friends at the Institute were Olya and Lena Bystrova. I should mention that they got on very well but only when we were all three together. In my absence they quarrelled, sometimes for the most trivial reasons, and then one would complain to me about the other.

I must also mention a certain man, though I was not so close to him as to Olya and Lena: Lyosha Dmitriyev, the Secretary of our Komsomol cell. He was a tall, lean young man, who was shy and blushed easily and impressed everybody who knew him by his sincerity and uprightness. He stuttered slightly, but this defect not only did not prevent him from speaking at meetings, it actually gave his speeches an impression of vigour and strength. It was as though he kept drawing himself up every minute to take a running dive, but this running dive was carefully aimed each time at his adversary's weakest point; I remember particularly well his speeches against the opposition. He was a born agitator, with a real gift, able to find the living, practical basis of the most general and abstract questions.

I lived well at the hostel, among other reasons because from my third year onward I belonged to a student commune. The commune was large, it had about two hundred members, with an economic and catering commission and a treasurer, to whom every month we handed over our stipends, keeping one and a half rubles for ourselves. This was not for tram fares, since we travelled on them as stowaways, but for "tea allowance" or, as the students humorously called it, "spree allowance," the spree consisting of sticks of vanilla bought at a confectioner's on Grand Avenue.

But of course the most interesting thing that happened at the hostel was the debates on topics of the day. One of them I have always remembered, because that evening the famous poet Mayakovsky visited us.

The subject of the debate was "Art and Utilitarianism" or something like that—roughly, as to whether art was compatible with utilitarianism or not. The first point of view, that of compatibility, was defended by a critic, I don't remember his name, perhaps it was Korochkin; a handsome, plump young man in spectacles, who spoke in rounded, polished phrases which somehow melted in our ears so that absolutely nothing remained. The other point of view, incompatibility, was upheld by a dark man who was also handsome, with burning black eyes; this was the critic Lurye, who spoke extraordinarily fast and used a lot of foreign words. The critics sat on a dais behind two small tables and placed opposite each other, and spoke in turns. At first I found their debate rather amusing, mainly because they began nearly every phrase in the same way: "I am bound to observe that my esteemed colleague..." and we laid bets as to how many times these words would be uttered. But later we got bored and the canteen in which the debate was taking place was quickly becoming deserted. At that moment Mayakovsky arrived.

He stood in the doorway, so big and broad-shouldered that at the very first sight it seemed natural that just he and nobody else should have written "Left March." Tilting his head he listened first to one critic, then to the other, and smiled; perhaps he thought it funny that they sat behind two tables and addressed each other so lengthily and politely. He had come with some woman and we stared at her. It would be very interesting to know who she was: his wife? his sister? The woman immediately whispered something to him, and he had to bend down from his enormous height in order to hear what she said.

Then the general discussion began. Mayakovsky spoke, and I heard for the first time that deep voice of his which sounded first like approaching thunder and then like thunder moving away. Gury, who was present at the debate, remarked rather neatly that this was the voice of a man who wrote verses which one couldn't read in a whisper.

I can't say that Mayakovsky rated the importance of the debate very high. He calculated roughly how much time had been spent on it to no purpose and it came to something like 1,800 man-hours.

"What could you do with 1,800 man-hours?" he asked, glaring at us.

And he suggested that the next time we felt like having a debate of this sort we should sweep the snow off the tram-lines.

"Now this Korochkin," he said, and nodded toward the handsome, plump critic in spectacles who sat on the left, "maintains that...." And in his own words, very briefly, he stated what, in his opinion, Korochkin had said.

"And that Korochkin," he went on, indicating the critic who sat on the right, "maintains that...."

This was so unexpected after all the politeness with which the adversaries had been refuting each other at length, and at once so painful and so funny, that the critics didn't sit there much longer but went away, first the Korochkin sitting on the left, then the Korochkin sitting on the right. And on the dais, having taken off his jacket and hung it on a chair, was Mayakovsky, pacing up and down.

"Vladimir Vladimirovich, *150,000,000*!" the students shouted. He stopped, explained that he had just returned from America and would like first of all to tell us about that, in prose....

I turned round, putting my cold hands to my cheeks, and saw a great number of young, serious, attentive faces—familiar, well-known faces of comrades in my commune, my Institute, my year. These were "us," that is, the generation which had a lot to do. It is hard to explain how I felt. It was everything at once—both the thought that our life would be difficult, and pride that this hard, interesting life had fallen just to our lot, and a sort of courage, a brave feeling, as though the breath of a storm had touched me and I had looked boldly into the face of this storm. But the big man strode with long but quiet strides up and down the dais and went on talking and talking. He did not think of concealing the difficulties, trials, and sufferings that awaited us. He sternly demanded of us heroic deeds every day—"every day, and in the form of rough work if that is what the people need."

* * *

I had two other "main homes" besides the hostel—the Bystrovs' place and Nina Bashmakova's. My room-mates always knew that if I wasn't at my first home then I must be at my second or my third. At Nina's there was also a circle of students, but they were astonishingly unlike ours. They were Conservatoire students, students at the Institute of Scenic Arts and young actresses and, listening to them, I always found myself getting worried lest I should grow unsociable over my microbes, which demanded more and more care and attention.

Nina had got very good-looking. Young men often confessed their love for her, and then she would rush off to me in an emotional state and drag me to her place to spend the night, because she had to discuss with me immediately whether it was serious or not. Almost always it seemed to her that it was serious, and I had occasion to declare—how many times!—that not everyone can love, because love is a sort of talent, like art or science. And Nina, as always, went to sleep in the middle of a sentence while I lay for long afterwards with my eyes open. I remembered the Tesma embankment, rafts, rafts, wherever you looked, and the morning mist rising over us, and the noise and the wharves, and what we talked about and what we never said a word about. And as I dozed off it seemed to me that it wasn't Andrei with me but somebody else, somebody tall, who ignored me, with angrily lifted brows. "And you," I asked myself, "can you fall in love? Probably not. And it's a very good thing that Andrei's stopped writing to me, though I can't think what I've done to him to deserve it. . . ."

On Saturdays Volodya Lukashevich came over from Kronstadt and Gury called, and Nina's room was transformed into a corner of Lopakhin, as though when we left our native town we had brought our youth with us.

My third home, however, was such a Leningrad home that nothing more "Leningrad" could be imagined.

That was the home of the Bystrovs.

I had long ago forgotten altogether my first, "chilly" encounter with Vasily Alexeyevich Bystrov. Now I always tried to visit Lena on those rare occasions when he was at home. On rest-days we went for walks together, and these were very interesting walks, because he knew the history of each street and each house.

Vasily Alexeyevich was a member of the Executive Committee of the district Soviet, and took a very active part in drawing up the plans which were destined to transform the Moscow-Narva District. He was especially keen on the idea of establishing a House of Culture. In 1925 it was decided to erect a House of Culture on a waste-plot in Narva Square.

What a pity I was so careless in those days that I didn't write down even a single one of Vasily Alexeyevich's innumerable stories! They weren't actually stories, but brief reminiscences, and how clearly, sometimes in two or three phrases, his simple and original character showed through.

Here, for example, is how he talked about his underground work:

"... Having another man's identity card sometimes caught you out in unexpected ways. Once I was using the identity of Nikita Yershov, peasant of Pskov Gubernia. Suddenly I got a notice—eight rubles land tax. I paid it. A second one—so much for poll tax. I paid that, too. I thought that would be the lot. Not at all! A third arrived—200 rubles arrears! I spat. Got another identity card. Changed my district. Became Ilya Alexandrov, townsman, of Pavlov Settlement, Moscow Gubernia. ..."

We often talked about Mother, and I learnt strange, surprising things: for instance, that when she was young Mother was very beautiful.

Vasily Alexeyevich talked about her without any reserve, quite differently from the way she had always spoken about him. Thus, he told very simply how she had jilted him and married another man, and how after the wedding he had helped the "young people." He tried to fix my father up with a job in the Putilov Works and persuaded him to take the temperance pledge, but not long afterwards Father broke the pledge.

"It's a very good thing that you've left your father, Tanya," he said seriously to me one day. "He's the sort of man it's hard not to be sorry for, but at the same time, to be sorry for him is a crime!"

Vasily Alexeyevich worked as foreman in the pattern shop, but at home he had a joiner's bench of his own on which he was always planing, cutting out or sawing something for himself, or rather, in the long run, not for himself but, for instance, for the future House of Culture. Indeed, everybody was busy when I visited the Bystrovs, though somehow it worked out that these occupations of theirs didn't prevent them from talking and laughing and even playing tricks on each other. They played tricks mainly on Maria Nikandrovna Bystrova, who was credulous, good-natured in a cross sort of way and quick-tempered, and who entered passionately into all the cares and affairs of youth. I said, passionately, and that's just how it was. How many times have I heard Maria Nikandrovna's indignant speeches about some aunt or other who had refused to support a comrade or friend of Lena's! How many times Maria Nikandrovna abused and denounced our anatomy lecturer, who really was an unfair fault-finder! Whom didn't she help, with clothes or with money? She was easily attracted to people and found it hard and painful to be disappointed in them. With us students she was famous for her wonderful pies, among other things, but Lena and I knew that she loved to try out new and venturesome recipes which often led, alas, to staggering catastrophes. These sufficed to provide jokes at her expense for at least a week.

Maria Nikandrovna was a woman of fifty-five, large, noisy, broad, so that Vasily Alexeyevich, who was of average height, seemed small and thin beside her. A frequent visitor to the Bystrovs was Yelena Petrovna Ovtsina, a worker at the Elektrosila and a future pupil of mine—I coached her for the adult school.

On the whole it was Lena who was the heart of this household, with her frankness, her quick decisions and the love of meetings which was typical of her. And not only meetings—it was a pleasure for her to mix with the crowds on holidays and at dances. I can still see her in the streets of Leningrad after the May Day demonstration, when the columns had already joined up and were beginning to disperse, spreading in disorderly fashion over the pavements and the roadway; Lena, happy, her kerchief all on one side, brandishing a paper rose and neatly brushing off the other boys and girls with a laugh (she had a ready tongue), then suddenly vanishing round a corner or through a gateway. That meant that she had seen some small child, and was absorbed in this child to the exclusion of everything else in the world. She adored children. Friends and relations had grounds for the advice they were always giving her to become not a doctor, but a teacher in a kindergarten or a school. But Lena held that, if you were to teach others, you had to be able to work on yourself, "and so far as I'm concerned, that's something I've never been able to manage to do."

## NOTHING COMES

My first essay (I chose the subject "anatoxin against diphtheria") was, on the whole, quite a success—not, of course, that I had managed to say anything new, far from it, but because for the first time in my life I read a few real scientific works. Oh dear, how hard it was! And how unlike that dangerous, interesting life of the fighter against disease which Zaozersky had described in his first lecture. There was nothing selfless in this reading, which threw me at once into a sweat, so that I sat blinking my eyes and flushed, as though in a bath. It was as if these books were written in a foreign language—that was how I read, pausing after each sentence. I always approached the table on which lay Nikolai Vasilyevich's book *Observations on Diphtherial Anatoxin* with one and the same feeling, a desire to run away from it, and that as quickly as possible. But I didn't run away. I read the *Observations* twice, then set to work on another, still more difficult book, and so, day by day, became utterly absorbed in reading scientific works. When my essay had been read and discussed, Zaozersky told me, laughing, that he was afraid "I would never succeed in doing anything greater in my life—in volume, anyway." He was joking, of course. But within a few days I came into the department, and the first thing he asked me was whether I intended to go on studying diphtheria.

I replied that I did and, putting his arm round my shoulder, he walked with me, deep in thought, up and down his study (that was a habit of his), and gave me some independent work to do. It was an experiment in active immunization against diphtheria, a rather complicated problem, especially for a student, and one which in any case I could not solve by reading.

I had to learn:

(1) to infect healthy guinea-pigs and dissect them when infected;

(2) to try out, that is to study, the growth of diphtheria bacilli in various nutrient media; and

(3) to prepare these media from blood sera, etc.

And that's far from being a complete list of what I had to learn!

The department was very large, or so it seemed to me in those far-off years. Besides myself there were at least ten other students working under Nikolai Vasilyevich, each of whom was (or seemed) a thousand times cleverer and better read than I was. Whenever the proud, handsome woman assistant walked past me she did something with her fine eyes that always sent a faint shiver running down my back. The cross old woman who was the demonstrator continually sent me back to the second-category school. And, generally, it was very frightening at first, and not just at first, but for a long period, for three months. Everybody sniffed at me. I was in everybody's way. At last one of Nikolai Vasilyevich's assistants gave me a place of refuge in his study. He was a small, round, tousled and, by my standards at that time, elderly man, twenty-eight years old. His name was Rubakin, but the whole department called him just Petya.

I don't remember where it was that I read—perhaps in De Kruif—about "moods of despair peculiar to young women bacteriologists." It would be hard to find a more appropriate description of my state of mind at that time.

Like the boy in the fairy-tale who was left all alone in the wood by his elder brothers, I wandered through a dark labyrinth where I came across abysses and ambushes at every step, and which was called "an experiment in active immunization" and so forth.

That went on for a day, two days, three, a week, a month! The whole winter! Clinical work began and I missed the introductory studies in therapy, and disgraced myself by discovering a distinct noise in the heart of an hepatic patient of whom the Professor had said that nowadays we "rarely meet people with healthier hearts." But would I have been depressed by such trifles if I'd managed to achieve something in the laboratory? If Petya, smiling shyly, had not hidden the glass cover of the microscope from me in the cupboard? (I had broken some glassware.) Or if the handsome, proud woman assistant had not told Nikolai Vasilyevich, thinking that I wasn't listening (or, on the contrary, meaning me to hear): "Nothing will ever come of her. All her fingers are thumbs."

In the end, though, I learnt something. The guinea-pigs, for instance, began to take the infection; the first time I tried they had refused to meet me half-way even in this respect. The nutrient media began to come to something. But the diphtheria bacillus, which I (as I thought, very successfully) was trying out in these media, for some reason or other didn't want to lose its toxic properties. It wouldn't—that was my main problem at that time.

Of course I knew who could help me—Nikolai Vasilyevich! But he didn't so much as come near me, and when, the moment I saw him, I rushed up to him with my question ready, he looked indifferent and hurriedly walked past me. Nevertheless I did ask him what books he would recommend for my work. He grinned slyly and said:

"Read *Don Quixote.*"

What did that mean? Worried, I went back to the lab, and Petya Rubakin, laughing, explained to me, "Nikolai Vasilyevich uses methods like that."

Anyhow, there was only one way out: to work. And I worked, trying to drive away the gloomy doubts which tormented me like a repeating, exhausting dream.

* * *

That evening I went from the lab to Nina's, failed to find her in and decided to wait for her: I wanted to spend the night at her place.

Usually at ten o'clock a low droning would sound from the other side of the wall; that would be the mistress of the house reading Tolstoi's *War and Peace* to her grandson. But today there was silence, as though on purpose for me to be able to think quietly: what had happened to me?

Nothing special! The same thing that had happened that sad day when the producer at the Institute of Screen Art had told me that I might become anything I liked—a mathematician, an engineer, a teacher—but an actress, even a very bad one, never!

"But a scientist, even a very bad one," I could add now, "never!" The work was not proving a success and I must simply drop it. The work was not proving a success. What could I do? Smother the feeling of joy, wonder and happiness, that was kindled in my heart when I read Mechnikov's *Optimistic Studies,* which had become my favourite book? Go to Nikolai Vasilyevich tomorrow and give up the subject he had assigned to me—for ever!

I didn't at all want to get up, but I did, nevertheless; I found Nina's dressing-gown and sat down at the table. I had to write some letters. I counted them up on my fingers—five, at the least.

"Gury, don't call for me the day after tomorrow, I'll be busy." That was the shortest and simplest of the letters. I would explain everything to Gury when I met him, and my ticket (he had got a couple of tickets for a performance of *Siegfried*, with the well-known actor Yershov in it) could go to some other boy or girl, I didn't care who.

Composing the second letter was very much more difficult because it had to be received and read by a grown-up, serious, wise man who had only one shortcoming: he declared that he could not live without me. I wrote to him that I was leaving Leningrad for a country district and that perhaps we "might meet again some day." "And if we don't meet," I added indifferently, "forgive me and don't bear a grudge against me. Always grateful for your friendship, T. V."

I don't know how many times I sighed before I got down to the third letter, which was to go to a young doctor not long graduated from the Army Medical Academy. Our relationship was of the kind where you don't need to say anything to each other, you just meet gaily and go off together to the Philharmonic Society or to the performances of the Moscow Art Theatre's touring company. He used to gaze at me with childlike, joyous amazement when anything interesting, witty or terrible struck him. Yes, he would undoubtedly be very sad to get this letter, all the more because he was lonely like myself, and only recently had told me that he would have liked to have had a young sister whom he could sometimes make a fuss of.

And to him I wrote the truth, namely, that from that day onward all my time would be devoted to work in the department, and it was for this reason I was dropping him, that it wasn't a matter for sorrow, and that he must forget about me till the spring. Why till the spring? That wasn't clear, but I screwed up my eyes and stretched, and wrote, nevertheless: "till the spring."

Nina came in when I was working at my fourth letter and merely said, "What, the doctor's not asleep yet?" so that I knew that she'd given a successful performance. The Conservatoire students had put on Chaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades* and Nina (it was her début) had that day sung the Countess for the first time.

Without taking her coat off, she kissed me, then waltzed round the room, sat on the floor and blinked her eyes.

Then she talked, and it was as though a huge, light, multicoloured heap had collapsed on top of me. In five minutes I had learnt about a dresser who had pinned some ribbon or other badly, about some Vaska Smetanin who had said that Ninochka was born to sing the Countess, and about the enthusiasm and applause of the public which, apparently, had pricked up its ears the moment Nina appeared on the stage in Act I—in short, about everything which my friend was full of and which was miles away from me.

Eventually Nina went to bed and was asleep in a moment, and the room changed at once, just as a stage does, where a moment ago there was noise and merriment, but the curtain has fallen and silence and darkness have followed.

* * *

But life went on, day after day, month after month. Now I was writing my first case history. Complaints on admission—shortness of breath, weakness, headaches. Nobody knew what this man was dying of, but he was dying. In the hands of people who knew the secrets of disease, he was dying. The students argued in a whisper about whether a doctor has the right to shorten useless sufferings, and the assistant retorted in a whisper that it was his duty to help the patient right down to his last breath. What had made this man of twenty-five motionless, lying straight and stiff, with his legs stretched out, his face sullen and waxen, absorbed in his last cares? Who knows? The diagnosis was questionable.

Now we were considering, at a general meeting of the Komsomol cell, the case of Korsavin, a young doctor who, after qualifying at the Institute, had refused to go to work in the provinces. Lyosha Dmitriyev, vigorously banging his fist on the table, had declared that Korsavin ought to pay back to the State the 1,760 rubles spent on his training.

"That would be a splendid lesson to all these pseudo-unemployed who refuse to go and work in the villages, because they'd rather ramble about the streets of the big cities!"

Lena Bystrova, pale, emotional, determined, was given the floor, and the room fell silent. They knew and loved Lena. A hush.

"What is this work in the countryside about which people talk so much? Yes, it is heavy work. One day the country doctor cures a case of trachoma, another he assists a difficult birth, the next day he performs an operation for hernia. And there are long journeys, by day and night, in blizzards and snow-storms, cruel winter and rainy autumn, when he has to walk two or three miles up to the knees in mud. But if a thing is hard, does that make it impossible? War is a thousand times harder, but do the hardships of war justify the deserter?"

Our anatomy lecturer limped to the rostrum. Masha Kolomeitseva, who sat behind me, said ruefully, "Well, now we'll learn that the most important thing in anatomy is system."

But we learnt something quite different.

"When I hear people talk about the hard conditions in which country doctors do their work, I find myself remembering what it was like in the past, and I want to say a few words about that. Seventeen years ago, as a young doctor, I was stationed in a god-forsaken district in Siberia. My medical centre was set up in a little two-roomed house. In one of the rooms was the 'in-patients' ward, which meant five or six beds standing almost edge to edge, and in the other—the surgery, the dispensary, the operating theatre and my study. Every day I went out to settlers' villages which had been attacked by typhus. Frequently the houses were buried in snow up to roof level, and one had to lower oneself into the passage by way of the attic in order to examine patients by the light of a candle-end. My assistant was a woman feldsher from among the exiles. And the nearest medical centre was different from mine only by the fact that it served not twelve thousand but fifty-eight thousand people, and was not thirty but two hundred miles from the railway line. Judge for yourselves what the work of a country doctor was like in pre-revolutionary Russia. . . ."

I wanted to speak, too, but fear held me back: there were such a lot of people there! I delivered my speech when I returned home, lying in bed, with the coverlet over my head.

"Yes, amid snow-storms and in bitter frost. . . . But can these hardships and privations deter one who has decided to devote his life to the high calling of a doctor?"

In content it was similar to what Lena Bystrova had said, but in form it was like Anna's speech in Gury's film-scenario. Not in vain, indeed, had I enjoyed a success in that part.

"Yes, it is a hard school! But what are these problems in comparison with the happiness which seizes the doctor at the moment when. . . ."

And with sparing but exact strokes I depicted the young doctor going to the bed of a sick child. The parents, worn out, look at him mistrustfully but with hope. Modestly but confidently, he (or she) makes a diagnosis, and only smiles when the mother (or father) asks in a trembling voice, "Is there danger?"

Here a murmur begins among the audience, "Keep to the point!" "You're not on the stage," and so forth. But I stand there, aloof, calm, firmly pressing my pale lips together.

"Yes, it is the front line, as the previous speaker has said. And if we desert this front line, dare we call ourselves the proud representatives of the revolutionary world?"

And for a long time I went on composing my interesting speech under the coverlet.

* * *

Life goes on, day after day, month after month.

I am in the old Botkin Hospital barracks, walking along a long row of beds on which patients are lying—excited, concentrated, caught unawares, shocked, indifferent, half-dead. A terrible, agonizing travail is in progress in each of these beds: life is working to conquer death. The unseen world of which the old doctor used to speak rules amid the feverish tension of the barracks. How can one penetrate that mysterious world? It is a matter for one's own hands, mind, will and hope.

The diphtheria bacillus refuses, as before, to shed its toxic properties and my work doesn't advance at all; and, as I think about this, day and night, during lectures and practical work, in the department and during the sessions of the subjects commission, I remember, at last, that the old doctor referred in one of his lectures to the inhibitory effect of liver extract on the bacillus of anthrax. For the first time in the last three years I find among my Lopakhin diaries and letters the notes which I took from Pavel Petrovich's lectures—and set myself to read them.

* * *

They were in three home-made note-books, sewn together from pieces of the yellow, brittle paper on which the minutes of the Lopakhin District Political Education Department were printed in 1920. Latin words were written in Russian characters and in the margins were scattered here and there drawings from which it was not hard to deduce that the listener's thoughts sometimes wandered very far away from the subject. Among these drawings one which occurred especially often was a profile which was not quite that of a Negro and not quite that of Gury Popov. In brief, it was plain from the whole thing that what the listener had least of all been thinking of was that a time would come when she would be painfully trying to reconstruct the thread that led from one lecture to another and subtly outlined, as it were, the frontiers of a theory.

True, it would be difficult, so far as these notes went, to describe Pavel Petrovich's ideas as a finished scientific theory. But the old man had worked on Mechnikov's idea of the antagonism between microbes from a new and unexpected point of view. In one of the lectures Mechnikov's idea about "beneficent microbes which protect us from the ones that cause disease" was reproduced word for word. Pavel Petrovich affirmed, however, that "beneficent forces" must be sought not only in the world of microbes, but also in the bodies of man, of animals, of insects—forces developed in the process of the struggle for existence over thousands of years. He had probably studied those questions long before, in the days when he was still a teacher at the University, for in the lectures he quoted examples from old works of his. Amongst these examples there was one which suddenly and for no apparent reason came back to my mind: it concerned the action of liver extract on anthrax bacillus. Not only anthrax, either, but glanders as well: that especially surprised me. As a matter of fact experiments had been carried out on animals, after repeated laboratory tests, and, so Pavel Petrovich declared, had produced successful results.

Glanders too.... It was at night, in the hostel, my roommates were asleep. I sat at the table by myself, reading my school note-books, and thought, "Glanders, too.... And maybe not only glanders."

Masha Kolomeitseva had asked me to wake her up at two. She had to take her exam in infectious diseases in the morning and knew nothing about the subject. I nudged her, but she turned over on her other side and fell asleep again.

The story about the night-watchman was included in one of the note-books. Mechanically I read a few lines of it, written in large, clumsy, childish characters. I recalled Lopakhin, where I was born and where I had lived for so long and which I somehow missed very much. What was my Lopakhin like now? The narrow-gauge railway had been completed, and engines whistled now not far from the Pustynka, by the Tesma itself. Not long before, I had read a piece in the newspaper about our tannery which was the first in the world to begin to use some sort of new artificial acid for tanning hides. In mid-December I had received a letter from Maria Petrovna, telling me that she intended studying at the music school which had been opened in the premises of the former "hire depot." She had proved she had talent when already a woman getting on in years. Only on Pavskaya Hill was there no change. The town bustled and bothered, but there peace reigned. With silent steps it paced the paths leading from one grave to another. Indifferently it looked at the fading plaque: "Dr. Pavel Petrovich Lebedev," with the dates of his birth and death. Indifferently it passed by the wooden railing around the hillock under which lay "Nadezhda Tikhonovna Vlasenkova," with the dates of her birth and death....

Well, that's enough! We'd better get back to liver extract. So, then, it inhibits the bacilli of anthrax and glanders. But why, exactly?

Masha slept, her hands crossed on her breast, and for some time I gazed fixedly at her, trying to remember what she had asked me about. Something important. Oh, yes. Tomorrow was Infectious Diseases and I must wake her somehow, otherwise she would be ploughed. I rose from the table, went up to Masha—and forgot what I had gone there for. Why, indeed, should I not add liver extract to the medium in which I was trying out my diphtheria bacillus? If liver really contains substances which inhibit the growth of anthrax and glanders bacilli....

Next day I sent a letter to my father at Lopakhin, in which I asked him if the trunk with the old doctor's papers was safe and sound, and could he send it to me in Leningrad by a reliable messenger? My father replied that the trunk was safe and sound, but he could not foresee an opportunity of sending it, unless he himself, perhaps, were to come to Leningrad, where he had long ago been offered work at the former Alexandrinsky Theatre.

Petya Rubakin raised his eyebrows mockingly when I told him about the liver, but helped me to prepare the extract. I carried out the experiment once, then a second, third, tenth time, and the diphtheria bacillus began to lose its toxic properties. I didn't believe this had happened until Petya said, decisively:

"And now go and see Nikolai Vasilyevich. At once!"

Six months had passed since I had been set to work on an "anatoxin against diphtheria." It was then already spring-time, and the old woman librarian had asked with surprise why, with exams in full swing, it had occurred to me to read *Don Quixote*. It would have been too complicated to explain that this book was, in Professor Zaozersky's opinion, a splendid manual for the study of diphtheria, and I replied that it was useful sometimes to break up one's study of a hard subject with a bit of light reading.

Nikolai Vasilyevich was in his study. After knocking on the door I went in and stood without speaking, placing *Don Quixote* on his table.

He opened it at the first page and chuckled:

"You've read it?"

"I've read it, Nikolai Vasilyevich." My note-book, with the results of the experiments, was enclosed in the book. "And there are the results."

This story had its beginning that day and hour when, in a remote village of the northern seaboard, a hundred and seventy miles from the railway, a five-year-old boy woke up one night and felt that he could not breathe. Four days he lay silent on his bed, with pale, waxen face, ears and nose gone blue, and throat swollen like a rattlesnake's. The fifth day he died.

What happened between his death and the note from Nikolai Vasilyevich which I found on my table? That I do not know. "Please call" was written there, in a sharp, bold hand, and Petya Rubakin also told me, without giving any explanation, that the Professor had asked me to go and see him.

... He was crouched sulkily over a map and his face wore a puzzled expression, when I walked into his study.

"Take a seat. I've something important I want you to do. Have you ever heard of a village called Anzersk Settlement?"

I recalled vaguely that Anzersk Settlement was somewhere in the North, on the same railway line as Lopakhin, but a very long distance away, and I said as much.

"This is how it is, my dear. It's more than a hundred and seventy miles from the railway. It's on the map—have a look. But it isn't in the encyclopaedia. Well, diphtheria serum has got to be delivered to that village. Why haven't they got any there? Why can't it be sent from Arkhangelsk? I don't know. And there's still another 'why?'..."

He vigorously scratched his head, with its childlike growth of down, and gazed at me with a sad but attentive expression.

"Why do I want *you* to do this?"

To be candid, I myself had wanted to ask him that very question.

I had just begun my summer practical work at the Sverdlov Hospital and in the department something "incomprehensible but interesting," as Nikolai Vasilyevich himself had said on the third day, had again begun to happen. My dear correspondent whom I had asked to forget me until the spring had sent me a telegram on the first sunny day of the year: "Tanya, it's spring!" And now June was behind us and we had arranged to spend our next rest-day on the sea, at Sestroretsk, and go to the theatre in the evening. I was worried about Nina: Vaska Smetanin had just proposed to her and she believed that "this time it's certainly the real thing." But, in addition to all these agreeable and, on the whole, not binding concerns, there was one important matter: Lyosha Dmitriyev had asked me to go and see him and I guessed he was going to say that I was spending too much time on academic work. Lena Bystrova, who was in the know, replied mysteriously when I asked her what our talk would be about, "About that, too...."

"Huh, she doesn't want to do it," Nikolai Vasilyevich went on, crossly, without waiting for my reply. "What, then—do you intend to spend all your life in this world of glass?"

The world of glass was the laboratory.

"And she refuses to understand what it's in the world for! No, indeed, madam! A microbiologist, who gets a chance nowadays to see a diphtheria epidemic with her own eyes and declines such a rare opportunity is no microbiologist!"

"What epidemic? You didn't say anything about an epidemic."

"Yes, yes. And a very bad one, too. Forty per cent mortality."

"From diphtheria?"

In my mind's eye I saw the pages of the textbook with the drawings of a child gasping for breath and a note giving the mortality before and after the discovery of the serum. Forty per cent—that was "before."

"Of course I'll go, Nikolai Vasilyevich. When must I start?"

"You'll have to fly!"

"All right, when do I fly? Today?"

"Tomorrow morning. And you must be at Anzersk Settlement the same day."

* * *

I went straight from seeing Nikolai Vasilyevich to look for Lyosha Dmitriyev. I had to look for him because it was still morning and life in the Trade Union Committee and the Komsomol cell usually began at four o'clock. Lyosha was already there, however; biting at his lip he was busy making notes from some book. I went in and was surprised to see how much he had changed since the last time I had seen him. He had aged, if one can use this expression of a young man of twenty-three with a tuft of hair like a cockerel's comb on the top of his head. We knew that he worked hard, taking an active part in the district Komsomol meetings, and had lately had a big article against the opposition published in our newspaper, and as I looked into his tired eyes, I felt myself guilty even before I had asked why he had sent for me.

"I want to have a talk with you, Tanya," he said, seriously. "Only not today. Come tomorrow at four."

"I can't."

"Why not?"

"Because tomorrow I shall be far away."

"Where?"

"At Anzersk Settlement."

I explained the task which Nikolai Vasilyevich had entrusted to me and he listened without interrupting.

"Well, good luck," he said. "When are you coming back?"

"It depends. I expect I'll be back within two or three weeks."

"We'll talk then!"

* * *

I don't know anything about aeroplanes, and it is quite possible that the aeroplane placed at my disposal was the result of some brilliant designer's ideas. But that must evidently have been a long time ago, because when I first set eyes on it I was reminded of a photograph in *Niva* of 1914, showing an air battle between Russian and enemy "machines." The picture showed "machines" just like this one, and so this word was always associated in my mind with an image of something rattling made up of plates and rods. It also, however, rather reminded me of a what-not, which, of course, one can't call a "machine." In brief, I was to fly in an "*avrukha*," as the aeroplane duty officer called my plane, that is to say, in an aeroplane of antique design.

A man of athletic build, of whom it was rather frightening to think that he would shortly clamber into the what-not, which would nevertheless take off with him in it, came up to me and introduced himself, courteously but gloomily, "Tabalayev."

Nikolai Vasilyevich told me, for the sake of prestige, to call myself a doctor, so I replied, blushing slightly, "Doctor Vlasenkova," but then I repented of it because the airman looked me over closely, pondered and coughed dubiously.

"Let's assume it's so," he said. "Well, how can I be of assistance, doctor?"

I explained that it was necessary to convey to the North a couple of boxes of ampoules. "As you see, they are quite small."

The airman said, "I see," then took out his pipe, lit it and gazed at the boxes, which evidently filled him with wonder.

"You'll have to do it, Vanya," said the officer on duty.

"It's an old machine," replied the airman gloomily.

Nevertheless, he carried off the boxes, grumbling to himself, and soon afterwards came back bearing a sort of pelt in which in a trice he wrapped me up, as though I were a child. Then he explained that there were two cockpits in the aeroplane and I should be sitting in the second one. In front of my eyes would be a dashboard full of instruments and in front of my knees a lever called the "joystick" would be moving to and fro, this way and that. On no account must

I think of grabbing hold of this joystick; God preserve me if I did!

I asked him whether it was possible for the lever not to move and he replied thoughtfully that it was possible. "But in that case, doctor," he observed gravely, "the aeroplane would not fly."

Then the officer on duty said, "Good luck, doctor!" and helped me to clamber into the cockpit, which was very cramped and was made of green cloth walls stretched on wooden rods. On the fuselage in front of me was a cracked, foggy-yellow peak through which I could see a similarly cracked, foggy-yellow sky, and beneath my feet was the opening for the joystick which I was forbidden to grasp. That opening was a comfort to me; through it I could see a green oval piece of the earth which I was forsaking....

"That's fine, doctor," said the pilot, glancing into my cockpit.

Later on during our journey, too, he never called me anything but "doctor," and though I didn't blush any more, having got used to it, it was plain that this innocent little joke gave him a lot of amusement.

We rolled forward across the huge, deserted field, where the light of the white night was already giving way to the rosy tints of dawn. We bounced up and down as though in a cart.

"Comrade," I shouted, "where have you stowed the boxes?"

A frightful, deafening roar burst forth in reply, so close that it was as though somebody was rushing at me deliberately in order to groan, howl and boom in my very ears. The aeroplane staggered forward, then still further forward, and the oval green bit of ground beneath me fled away, then began to withdraw below and become bigger and bigger.

"The first and main thing," Volodya Lukashevich had said when taking leave of me, "is not to think about the fact that you are flying."

Huddled in the pelt, which for some reason smelt of castor-oil, and having at every moment to shield myself from the joystick, which rocked now forward, now backward, it was somewhat difficult not to think about the fact that I was flying. But an hour passed and then another, and strange as it may seem I caught myself thinking that in spite of her superlative taste in music, Nina had bought me some blue silk for a blouse to wear with a brown costume. Then I thought of Nikolai Vasilyevich pacing up and down in his study, his short, thick hands clasped behind his back. "Not so fast," he had said, when, after he had spoken to me, I was hurriedly taking leave of him. "There's this, too. Have a look to see if it's only diphtheria they have there. That's a hellish high mortality. I've got an idea that they've got tonsillitis there, too. Once upon a time I thought about streptococci intensifying the toxicity of diphtheria. Well, now you put your mind to it."

All right, then, let's put our mind to it! I should have been asleep but for the wind, which burst whistling into the cockpit from all sides and made merry under the pelt, which the pilot had not fastened tight enough around my legs.

"Well, how are we doing?" I bawled, trying to shout down the whistling noise, which seemed to me louder and more objectionable than the even sound of the engine.

"Badly!"

I thought that I had misheard him.

"What did you say?"

"Badly!" shouted the pilot. "A slide's going. We'll have to come down. . . ."

"What do you mean, come down? We must be at Anzersk Settlement today!"

He didn't reply, and I started to shout that he had no right to come down when he was carrying a doctor for whom patients were waiting. I can't say it was particularly easy, while protecting myself against the cold, the wind and the noise, sitting now on one frozen foot, now on the other, to explain to the pilot the importance of anti-diphtheritic serum as a prophylactic and curative medicine. But I did explain it, and I can't have done it too badly, because I felt the aeroplane, which had been going to land, suddenly straighten out and even gain height.

We did about two hundred kilometres on my "fuel," as the pilot later called that lecture of mine. But something else went wrong with the engine, and it was necessary not merely to land but to save ourselves from crashing.

"Can you hear me, doctor?"

"Yes."

"I'm going to land."

I shouted that he ought to be court-martialled for cowardice, but the aeroplane began to descend smoothly, and along with it my heart began to sink in a frightful way, so that, alas, I had to stop talking.

To make up for it, when we had landed, and the noise, the cold and the whistling had all stopped at once, I fell upon the pilot in a way that astonished myself. Was this really me, shouting so hoarsely and brandishing my arms with such fury? He heard me out in silence and said that all that was true, but nevertheless it was not possible to fly any further. He explained at length why this was, and from his face and his hands, which trembled slightly as he pushed his helmet on to the back of his head and began to fill his pipe, I understood that it was, in fact, not possible.

In the distance I could see the lights of a town and I wanted to carry my boxes there at once, but he wouldn't let me go.

He made me sit down, opened some tinned meat, and broke some dry bread into pieces.

"You must eat, doctor," he muttered, and stuck a teaspoon into the meat. "Otherwise you won't help anybody and you'll have to be put in a box yourself."

* * *

A strange, wild countryside with twisted-looking trees stretched before us, coldly tinted by the rays of a pale sun. But landscapes were of very little interest to me that day.

All the time as we walked along I was saying that from V—sk (evidently this town was V—sk) to Anzersk Settlement it was more than sixty miles, and it would be difficult, or even actually impossible, to get a car. The pilot replied, logically, that in that case it would be necessary to make one's way there on foot, on horseback or in a cart. But I shouted at him again and he remained submissively silent, groaning from time to time (the boxes were heavy) and sucking at his pipe, which had gone out.

On the outskirts of V—sk we knocked at the first house we came to, and the mistress, a pretty young woman with long hair and blue eyes, gave us some milk to drink and told us that there were only two cars in the town; one belonged to the town Soviet and the other to the militia, and in any case they wouldn't let me have a car.

"And if they did give you a car, you wouldn't get there, love; you wouldn't get there."

"Why not?"

"The Anzerka's in flood. Perhaps a rowing-boat would get across, love; and perhaps it wouldn't."

The pilot was worrying about his *avrukha*, but I left him to stand guard over my boxes while I went to the office of the town Soviet.

... A black dog which came running out of a gateway threw itself at my legs. I cried out without meaning to, and jumped back. Then I walked on again, but suddenly I felt so tired that I wanted to lie down where I stood, on the planks of the footway squelching under my feet, so that I had to summon up an effort to begin thinking of something quite different.

The chairman of the town Soviet was a tall man, not yet old, with a pleasant face. He had already been informed that we had come down not far from V—sk and had sent a guard for the aeroplane. He had a car, a very good one, but it was being overhauled that day. Still, all was not lost: the G.P.U.'s covered truck would take me to the River Anzerka.

"But the road, you know," he said, "is only good for the first dozen miles or so. After that it's a bog, and dry only on the hills. Well, what's new in Leningrad?"

And he started to ask me about everything at once. What was on at the theatres, at the cinemas? From which aerodrome had I taken off—the Corps Aerodrome? Had I seen the Elektrosila Factory? He used to work there. Were the Leningrad stations receiving power from Volkhovstroi already? What did I think of the summary of the industrial plan for 1927, in which it was proposed to raise production by twenty per cent? What did I think about the offensive of the People's Revolutionary Army in China?

Then we went to see the head of the G.P.U., and I started to tell this quiet man with the big bald brow and broad cheek-bones that I could not afford to waste a moment.

"My dear friend," said the head of the G.P.U., reddening, "do you think I don't realize that it's a matter of life and death? But there isn't a car, do you appreciate that? Not one! Or, to be more precise, there is one, but it's operational. A prisoner has to be taken to an interrogation today. I can't send you in the same vehicle with a prisoner, I haven't the right. The car will be back in the morning. One night. Only one, after all!"

My lips quivered, not because I wanted to cry, but from anger because this man refused to understand that for a diphtheria patient not merely one night, but every hour, was of the greatest importance.

"Do understand, for heaven's sake," I said, getting in a rage.

Later on I remembered that I twice gripped the back of the chair, evidently calculating that by this most primitive of methods I would convince the head of the G.P.U. I don't know how it happened, but suddenly he said:

"All right. You'll go."

"When?"

"Now. But would you please write me a letter, explaining all the circumstances of this matter. Give me your hand."

He shook my hand firmly.

"Now I'll make the arrangements."

* * *

A few hours later, exhausted, but full of zeal to set to work immediately the tested wonder of science, I was driving down to the bank of the Anzerka. An old chapel appeared in the distance, then some half-tumbled-down buildings which might be barns, and at last—the broad ribbon of the river. The driver stopped his car at the ferryman's cottage and helped me to unload the boxes.

"Hey, grandad!" he shouted. "Come out, if you're there!"

A grey old woman in a sheepskin coat came out to the porch and said there would be no crossing that day.

## THE CROSSING

The ferry-boat had been swept away by the flood, together with the landing-stage, the old woman explained, and the people had gone straight to the Krutitsky rapids because they were afraid that the boat had been carried over them. Even if it had not been swept over the rapids it would have to be towed back by horses, and there would not be any crossing to the settlement for a day or two.

"Well, then, let's cross in a dinghy," said the driver.

"There is a dinghy. But won't you drown?"

"We shan't drown, grandma! We haven't the time. We're on urgent business."

"Oh dear, you'll be drowned!"

She said this so simply and with such deep certainty that the driver and I involuntarily glanced first at the swift, restless, dull-grey river and then at each other. But two days! Two days!

"Where's this dinghy?" I asked fiercely.

... That scene unrolls before me as distinctly as a paint-ing, as though I were not myself but somebody else attentively watching me. The old woman in the sheepskin coat stood on the bank of the river from which we had just cast off, and gazed after us for a long time, shaking her head. We were on the river and on the other side of it appeared Anzersk Settlement, looking like an old wooden fortress. Climbing up a small hill, grouped around a wooden church, stood houses which were so serene, so solid, that it was hard to imagine that in nearly every one of them lay children who were fighting a battle for life with a severe illness.

At first everything went splendidly. I steered, and the driver, who turned out, unfortunately, to be narrow-shouldered and puny as a boy, wielded the oars, which were rather heavy for him. The rowlocks were made not of iron but of wood, and there was only one of them, the other being broken, so that we had to fasten the oar to the side with a strap from my rucksack. "But all this is of no importance," I thought. "The main thing is that within half an hour I'll be in Anzersk Settlement."

I cheered up when I saw how quickly we were approaching it, and for the first time I lost that acute feeling that we needed to hurry and keep on hurrying. True, the old woman had said, "Oh dear, you'll be drowned," and when I remembered this I wanted to get quickly to the far bank. But that was quite a different feeling, nothing like the impatient agitation which had tormented me all the way.

Everything was going well, though from the bank from which we had set out one could have observed that the boat was moving not only forward but also sideways, so that the settlement suddenly appeared on our left hand. Of course, this meant nothing, there was a strong current after all, and naturally we were bound to be carried along by it. After a few minutes though, I began to get a little worried, because it seemed to me that we had almost ceased to move forward, even though the driver was wielding the heavy oars with such a frowning, furious, vigorous face.

The river had lost its former restless appearance, a faint, waning light was coming from off the water, reflecting clouds which still retained at their edges the last rays of the sunset, when it became completely obvious to us that the dinghy was being carried down the Anzerka. Possibly the driver had noticed the danger long since, but had kept quiet about it in order not to alarm me. Now he realized that I had guessed it and, perhaps for the first time, he was frightened—because until then he had been rowing smoothly, but now he began to plunge the heavy oars into the water. He became terrified, as though the danger had multiplied the moment I realized its existence.

"I can't carry on, I'm dead beat," he muttered.

I looked as though I hadn't heard him. We were in the middle of the river, but the settlement had moved so far to our left that it was better not to look at it.

"Perhaps you'd have a go for a bit now," the driver muttered again.

I abandoned the tiller and started to help him, leaning on the oar with all my strength. Then we changed places. This was difficult, because the dinghy swung sharply into the current the moment we stopped rowing. But we did change places, I remember, because suddenly it became necessary not to lean on the oars but to pull them, and I began to pull—at first unevenly, in jerks, but later smoothly, when I had realized that I should not grasp the oars by the handles but lower down. I was frightened, too, but my own fear angered me so much that I even ground my teeth in fury. It was rage, but not the blind rage in which you lose control of yourself; it was a lucid rage from which a strange feeling of courage flooded through my body. Then the feeling of courage disappeared, too, and all that was left was the heavy swaying forward and back and the heavy, monotonous lapping of the water, and a weary desire to drop the oars and lie down, which I had to fight under almost every minute.

"Is it far?" I didn't say it but groaned it through my teeth.

But it wasn't far now. The boat slowly came on to sand and heeled over, and I fell headlong. That was my last forward movement; my last backward movement I made mechanically, in the bottom of the boat, at the feet of the driver, who was bending over me and soundlessly but persistently asking me something.

* * *

I don't know how long we stayed on the river bank, on the wet sand. Mine was a weakness which had something almost vindictive about it, as though the body was revenging itself for having been forced to exceed the limits of the possible, to undertake what it had never before been able to do. I lay face downward, very calm, and thought about various things, none of which had any relation to what had happened or to what could have happened if we'd been carried over the Krutitsky rapids.

The Lvovs' kitchen, illuminated by the feeble light of a candle, appeared out of the darkness before my closed eyes, and I beheld Mitya, who came in and at first didn't realize who I was but then said, with affectionate surprise, "Let an old friend, whom I nearly killed, go away? Oh, no. That wouldn't be in my interests." That was when he returned from the front and came to Lopakhin wearing his helmet and cavalry greatcoat. How firmly he grasped my hands in his, how gentle he was with me after Mother's death! Was it possible that the old doctor had been right? What was it he said? "Brilliance of mind and blindness of egoism"? Yes, yes! He had said, "Blindness."

Then I began to think that if we hadn't pulled through, Mitya would have known nothing about what had happened to me. Perhaps at that very moment when I was lying like a corpse, with my arms awkwardly twisted, on the wet sand, he was in a bright, smart room awaiting visitors, opening a bottle of wine?

Why did my thoughts turn to him at that moment? I don't know. It was as though the nearness of death had driven away everything that I had lived for up to that time, and in its place had appeared, from the bottom of my heart, things that even yesterday had seemed totally uninteresting to me. It was as though a hidden, half-forgotten thought had profited by the fact that I was lying, weak and helpless, with all my strength gone, on the wet sand on the bank of an unknown river and, stealing up on me, had begun masterfully to take control of my heart....

I heard a rustle behind me and turned round. It was the driver getting up on his knees, standing and then falling down again, rolling up in a ball as though in bed.

We must go on! With numbed, half-dead hands I unfastened my rucksack and began to eat. Tears sprang to my eyes, so wonderful did the sausage sandwich taste to me. The driver said that I should drink some vodka. I drank some and lay down again, but not for long, for I still had to go on.

"You stay here and I'll go on."

The driver nodded without getting up.

"Look after the boxes! I'll send someone to fetch them, do you hear?"

He nodded again.

The first house which I came to was evidently uninhabited, because when I knocked and called out for the people of the house nobody answered my hoarse voice. The curtains were drawn across the windows of the adjoining house, but it seemed to me that a curtain trembled when I went up to the porch.

"Open up! I'm the doctor from Leningrad. Let me in!"

Not a rustle, not a sound.

"What's up with you here, are you all dead, or what?" I shouted, and stamped my feet in the porch.

Silence. If the epidemic had been one not of diphtheria but of plague, this street, winding up the hillside, could not have been more dead and deserted. I sat down in the porch and for the first time in my journey I really wanted to cry. For some reason I made up my mind that the driver had gone to sleep the moment I left him and the boxes had been stolen. Those worries and hardships had been in vain, and I myself, lonely and helpless, having somehow arrived in this silent village, was of no use to anybody. To hell with everything; and I wouldn't be a doctor, either! Doctors cure people, they don't carry boxes of serum to the ends of the earth. "I've got an idea that they've got tonsillitis there, too. Once upon a time I thought about that problem. Well, now you put your mind to it." His words came back to me. All right, then, I'd put my mind to it!

With a fury which surprised even myself I jumped up and ran to the wide, squat house opposite, which seemed especially hateful.

"Open up, damn you!" I cried, and began to kick the door.

At last! Voices, footsteps.

"Who's there?"

"The doctor from Leningrad."

I must have been still unconvinced that they would let me in because I repeated my cry of "Open up!" ten times. The door opened. A slender girl with plaits let me into the passage.

"The doctor from Leningrad?" she repeated in surprise. "Please come in."

The stuffy air of a small, partitioned-off room. The smell of iodine. An icon in the corner, a whitewashed stove. A tall, thin old woman in a white shawl was crossing herself when I entered. A man in a gown was leaning over the bed. The face of a child, thrown back, white as paper, was visible for a moment as this man, without turning to me, raised his hand the way people do when noise is disturbing them and they want those around them to be quiet.

This gesture and the fact that the man in the gown—obviously, the doctor—did not even turn round when I went in, particularly exasperated me.

"I've worn myself out crossing that crazy river. Nobody met me. I've been wandering about, knocking at all the houses. Well, why don't you say something? I've brought you some serum."

The man in the gown turned round. He took a step, then another, and the stethoscope which he held in his hands fell and rolled noisily on the floor. He stood with the light behind him but I didn't so much as glance at him, only wondered why this weary face, broad but fine-featured, this high brow and fair tuft of hair were somehow familiar.

"What the hell! Didn't you know I was coming?"

"Yes, Tanya," said the man in the gown, in Andrei's voice.

I must have misheard.

"And you couldn't meet me?"

"We expected you yesterday."

I said nothing, but seized him by the hand and dragged him to the window.

"Andrei? Andrei? Is it really you?"

## NIGHT ROUND

Within an hour the boxes of ampoules were brought to the settlement, and we began to go from one house to another. "We" meant Andrei, myself and Mashenka, the slender girl with the plaits, who turned out to be a feldsher. I could hardly grasp that all this was happening on the same day that I had sat with the driver in the dinghy, with clouds, still pink from the faint glow of the sunset, reflected in the water.

Then, it was late night. There was much that seemed to me strange, and if I had had more time I would certainly have pondered on a number of mysteries, in particular on one relating to Mashenka, which vaguely troubled me. Dawn was breaking but we were still going round and giving injections. There was something imperious and inspiring in this night round, in this impossibility to put off what must be done at once, and in these firm, confident hands of Andrei's, lit up by the feeble rays of tapers, night-lights or table-lamps. At length it began to seem to me that we were going from house to house not for the purpose of combating diphtheria, but only in order to see again those broad, firm hands as they broke an ampoule or lifted the syringe to the light. But they did many other things as well. They caressed and calmed children who as they watched our preparations stiffened, with horror in their eyes. They carefully changed the bandage on a pierced throat into which a pipe was inserted for the child, half strangled by croup, to breathe through. They wrestled with a woman two of whose children had died of diphtheria, and who would not let us go near the third, swearing frenziedly that it was in perfect health. They disappeared into rubber gloves and then reappeared, and we again made our way from one house to another, from one mute world in which there was nothing but the whistling sound of breathing to another. And it seemed to me that wherever Andrei went the feeble light of hope flickered up in eyes which were inflamed and distraught, staring into the unknown.

... This light was not to be seen in the eyes of the fair-haired boy of seven who lay apathetically with a bluish, drowsy face on which the dull tranquillity of death had already settled. Perhaps death was trying to enter this house, which was a well-to-do and spacious one, along with us, but for some reason it slackened its steps and remained on the threshold. I took the boy's helplessly hanging hand in mine and felt his weak, dying pulse.

Candles were burning on the table which stood by the dying child's bed, and an old man in spectacles, bent over a thick book, did not turn round, did not get up, did not utter a single word when we came in. Later he began to pray loudly, and I understood that in the presence of the thing that stood on the threshold he did not consider it necessary to pay any attention to insignificant persons who were trying to change the merciless law which doomed all earth's creatures.

"Almighty God," the old man prayed in a loud voice, "release the soul of Thy servant Alexei from all bonds and from all oaths, pardon his transgressions, known and unknown, in word and in deed, confessed and forgotten. . . ."

But the doctor with the thin, weary face evidently did not consent to abandon "to the Almighty the soul of his poor servant Alexei"; incidentally he reminded me of the doctor himself in those far-off days when he was trying to discover whether cockroaches had hearts. For a moment he stood unmoving, gazing attentively at the small, prostrate body, and then said, with decision:

"Get the things ready, Mashenka."

And Mashenka opened her little bag and took out the burner, the spirit and the instruments.

It was necessary to wrap the boy in a sheet, sit on a stool and firmly press his legs between one's knees. At first I did this, but Andrei for some reason ordered Mashenka to sit on the stool while I held the boy's head, so we changed places. This was an intubation, that is, introduction of a metal pipe into the larynx, and Andrei, strangely enough, wore an air as though he had done it a thousand times.

"Tanya, hold his head straight and still," he said. "No, a little more forward. Mashenka, hold him firmer."

And with a quick movement of the hand he placed the tube in the poor, mucus-clogged throat.

"That's all," he said.

But, alas, that was far from being all. The boy wheezed and opened his eyes, which were clouded and winced from the light. With a strength which one would not have imagined his slender, frail body could possess, he gave a jerk as he convulsively inhaled the air—and the pipe jumped out of his throat and flew, together with the splash from his cough, straight into Andrei's face.

"Oh!"

Mashenka cried out and wanted to get up—I felt her trembling.

"Spirit, quick!"

"Don't get up!" said Andrei, commandingly.

Quickly he wiped his face with spirit and everything began again.

"From dust we are created and to dust we return, according to Thy will..." the old man read.

"Right, ready," said Andrei.

And immediately we heard a sound of breathing, whistling with a metallic note, a sure sign that the pipe had found its way into the larynx.

It was strange to see how life, which had seemed to be already on its way out of this emaciated, submissive body, returned and brought colour to the boy's deathly white cheeks, and how a deep, restful sleep followed as though led by the hand.

It was quite light when, swaying as we walked, we left this house. Weariness had completely departed, in my case at least, so that I couldn't understand why I still so longed to lie down and why I had to watch my legs from time to time. As I walked I looked at Andrei, and how clear it suddenly was to me that he could only have turned out like this, with those unhurried, thoughtful movements of his hands as he rolled a cigarette, with those open, clear, straightforward eyes.

"Tanya, is it really you?" he asked. "I haven't had the time till now to look and convince myself that it's really you. Funny, isn't it?"

I wanted to say that it was funny indeed, but my head was going round, and I thought it would get better if I overcame this feeling and walked on. But it didn't get better. Andrei picked me up in his arms and the last thing I remember was that he was carrying me and I was telling him to put me down because I was all right, and I was surprised that though I spoke loudly, almost shouted, he didn't hear, didn't hear.

I slept for nearly twenty-four hours, and when I opened my eyes I didn't realize where I was or what had happened to me. The ceiling was so low that I could have touched it with my hand. Below me were some broad steps, and I lay on the topmost of these. On the window-sill and on the home-made shelves which hung here and there along the log walls stood Petri dishes, flanked by big and little retorts, and the thin, dazzling beams of the sun, criss-crossing, played on the glassware. It was a laboratory. But in fact it was the village bath-house—not without purpose did two fine birch-brooms hang in a corner under the ceiling.

Mashenka was sitting on a stool by the window half-turned towards me, and for a few minutes I looked at her without showing that I had woken up.

She had a pleasant, very youthful-looking face. Her hair, which was carefully plaited, hair by hair, like a little girl's, also made her look younger. She was slim and straight and one could tell merely by looking at her delicate cheeks and her little ears, visible under the plaits which were drawn across her head in a smooth hair-style with a parting, that Mashenka's movements were gentle and her voice quiet and unhurried.

"Good morning."

"Ah, you're awake?" She stood up and came over to me. "The driver called and asked me to give you his regards. He's gone. How are you feeling?"

"All right, thanks."

"How did it happen that Andrei Dmitriyevich and I didn't meet you on that river bank? They'd told us that the serum would be sent by plane, but the day passed and it didn't come. We wondered where that aeroplane could have landed. And we decided that it must have come down in Black Clearing—that's a place a couple of miles from here."

I told her how the aeroplane had flown only as far as V—sk and how we had nearly drowned in the Anzerka. Mashenka listened, opening her eyes wide. It was clear that she not only sympathized deeply with me, but from the bottom of her heart wished that nothing like this should ever happen to me again.

"What a pity Andrei Dmitriyevich isn't here," she said. "He hasn't heard your story. And I don't suppose you'll want to tell it a second time, will you?"

I laughed. She looked at me with surprise, blushed, then also started to laugh.

Now it was my turn to ask questions and I began with the epidemic: how long ago had it begun, how had it happened that there was no serum in the settlement, and so on.

"Oh, yes, there was some," Mashenka replied. "They sent some from Arkhangelsk at once, but Andrei Dmitriyevich said it wasn't fit to use because, apparently, they'd been keeping it in a very cold place. It had frozen and wasn't active any more. But the diphtheria began in a number of houses all at once, and in such a severe form, you know. If it had been localized, well, the way it usually happens, but this was toxic nearly everywhere and they all had croup, every one!"

Mashenka spoke circumstantially, using scientific words, which sounded a little strange in this ingenuous speech of hers. But it was just those words that she spoke particularly unhurriedly.

"And as for that croup, you saw yesterday what it's like. On the third day they begin to choke. What can you do? Just think how frightful it is! You look at the child in despair and think: how can I help? Andrei Dmitriyevich said that we'd suddenly slipped back into the nineteenth century. It's good that he's so well-informed, he knows how they treated diphtheria in the nineteenth century. You wouldn't believe—he draws out the mucus with a tube."

"What do you mean, with a tube?"

"Like this: he puts the tube into the child's larynx and sucks. And he can still laugh! He says, 'This is a visual excursion for you into the history of medicine, Mashenka.' "

"But that is very dangerous."

"Of course it is. Have you read Chekhov's story 'The Grasshopper'? There he tells how a splendid doctor sucked mucus like that and died. Now, of course, nobody treats diphtheria in that way. But, then, one can't bear to see how the children gasp for breath! We painted their larynxes with various disinfectants—but, naturally, that doesn't help. Andrei Dmitriyevich performed six tracheotomies—and he told me that he'd only done one before, and that as a student, on a corpse! And, besides, you know what it's like here? Whenever anybody's ill they say, 'His blood is troubling him,' and at once they bleed him. There's a quack over at Sudzha, and I've seen how she treats patients with the first water of spring. And with spells: 'Over the sea, over the ocean, on the island of Buyan, lies the stone named Alatyr, and on this stone sit three old men; there go to meet them the twelve sister-fevers—the shivering one and the trembling one, the wheezing one and the burning one...' " and Mashenka recited the spell to the end. "Are you called Tatyana Petrovna?"

"Just Tanya. And I'll call you Mashenka, shall I?"

"Nobody calls me anything else!"

"You live permanently in this settlement?"

"Yes. I could have gone to Salsk. That's where I come from. But I didn't want to. I chose this out-of-the-way spot myself..." she added, and blushed a little again. "But I'm not sorry, not sorry at all."

"Why not?"

"Well, why should I be? And what about Andrei Dmitriyevich? You know, it was only here that I realized why I had studied at all. I used to think I studied in order to earn more and live better. I had no other thought! But when I came here.... But don't imagine he talked to me about this, though I realized at once that he was a man with ideals. He simply lived here, in this bath-house, and worked.

And when I came I found they wouldn't let him into a single one of their homes."

"What do you mean, they wouldn't let him in?"

"It was like this. They were used to the quack, and they said, 'She treats our illnesses better than any doctor.' Of course, she had put them up to it, and all the easier because there are many kulaks here and, naturally, they weren't very pleased that Andrei Dmitriyevich was a Party member."

Mashenka said sometimes "man with ideals" and sometimes "Party member," evidently understanding the same thing by these words.

"But, you know, an accident helped him. It happened after I came. They boil salt here in a sort of special salt cauldron. One day one of the salt workers went blind. Andrei Dmitriyevich examined him, thought a little, and then put a few drops of cocaine on to the *conjunctiva*. The salt worker blinked—and flung himself at his feet! He'd recovered his sight!"

Mashenka chuckled, quietly but heartily.

"His tear gland had just got very swollen from the smoke. After that, they began to think highly of Andrei Dmitriyevich."

"And now?"

"Now a few of them hate him, but others would go through fire and water for him!"

"What do they hate him for?"

"Because he's so determined. He's very determined and always gets his own way if he wants to."

I listened with interest.

"And what's he got to be determined about?"

"Well, in everything, really. There are a lot of kulaks here and we have to fight against them in our medical practice. And not only in medical practice! Of course, if Andrei Dmitriyevich were non-Party, that would be a different matter. But they size up every health measure from the class standpoint. And then, they're very much afraid of Andrei

Dmitriyevich, because, you know what he's like. He won't be played about with!"

I remembered how, during our night round, one woman had hastened, as soon as we entered, to close the wooden leaves of an icon, and then we were so smoked out with incense that we couldn't breathe. And the sulky old man in spectacles who read the prayers for the dying over the boy and behaved as though we were not in the house? I asked Mashenka who that old man was and heard with astonishment, "Mitrofan Berezhnoi, Chairman of the local village Soviet." All these things were enigmas. But only the simple can throw light on the complex, as Andrei had been fond of saying.

Mashenka and I chatted all the morning, and then we heated some water and I washed myself with an enjoyment which had something primitive about it. Mashenka helped me and laughed.

## AN IMPORTANT CONVERSATION

They say that the fight against epidemics is like war—the same reconnaissances, break-throughs, offensives, attacks. But there was nothing resembling war in the careful, monotonous work which we carried out day and night; we worked at night because it was necessary not only to treat but also to nurse the patients.

This work consisted in our diligently treating very varied forms of diphtheria: very severe, severe, medium, and finally, latent, which could be discovered only by laboratory tests, and which we didn't know what to do with when we'd discovered it. It turned out that the entire clergy of the settlement church—priest, sexton, watchman—were diphtheria carriers, that is, they were people who, though never sick themselves, involuntarily and without knowing it spread diphtheria among their neighbours.

In one respect only did our work recall war: we could not forecast our losses. Thus, there died, in spite of very large doses of serum, the fair-haired boy who reminded me of Andrei, and also the third child of the woman who had lost two already. She stood for hours outside our bath-house, bare-headed and terrifying, rocking in her arms a log of wood wrapped in rags.

*Hushaby, baby, slumber now,*
*Into a big man you will grow,*
*And to the deer give chase,*
*And go to shoot the grouse...*

she sang, and it was impossible to go out without meeting her wan look.

*Grouse in the fir-tree shall be yours,*
*Auk on the lake your spoil shall be,*
*The wild duck flying over the sea,*
*And the cygnets on the shores.*

Mashenka wasn't afraid of her, but I was, and every time I went out of the bath-house I had to make an effort not to run away as fast as I could.

* * *

There is something hesitant in the relations between people who have known and loved each other in youth, and who meet again when they have lived apart not just for days and months, but for years. Was it a separation with complete oblivion, or has a memory of what had seemed forgotten gone on echoing in their hearts? Who knows? They part in youth, when impressions and reflections are astonishingly intimate. They meet when they have grown cold, either very much or not very much, and, when they compare their two lives, they are surprised, they sympathize, they feel indignant.

A change of heart or something like that would have been necessary for Andrei and myself to get back to the same relationship as before—or rather, not the same relationship, but another which would have been impossible without the earlier one. More than five years had passed, and what had been between us at Lopakhin now seemed to me something light and thin, like the first green shoots on the elms when we walked to the Pustynka that night after the school dance.

* * *

The sun was setting and a pale yellow globe without rays had already touched the serrated line of the ridge. After examining the sick daughter of the river pilot, who lived in a house at the edge of the settlement, we went outside and, both taking a deep breath of air, set off not to the left, our way home, but to the right, along the gently sloping bank of the Anzerka.

As we walked I was thinking that the sunset in this place didn't have the warmth it had in our district . . . in my mind I nearly said "in Russia," as though here, in Anzersk Settlement, we weren't in Russia. Around us lay not the warm, golden glow of departing day, but only the cold glare of the stony path, which led to the salt works lying among the winding ravines.

This was the first evening when we thought we might be able to talk about something else besides diphtheria; but we did talk about diphtheria all the same; about the extraordinary coincidence between an experiment which Andrei had carried out on the eve of my arrival and the idea which Nikolai Vasilyevich had given me. Andrei had read an article in the *Journal of Experimental Biology and Medicine* about the annihilating effect one intestinal bacillus had on other intestinal microbes, and had decided to apply this experiment to bacteria of tonsillitis and diphtheria.

Then we walked in silence for a long time, but now it was not our previous silence, caused by fatigue, but something different. It was Andrei, first as always, who spoke of the thing we were being silent about.

"Why did we stop writing to each other, Tanya? You were offended by that letter in which I reproached myself.... You know what I mean?"

He said this just as he used to when we were children and guessed each other's thoughts.

"Yes, I know."

He pushed his cap on to the back of his head, and his face took on a worried but determined look.

"Tell me, is it true that when Glafira Sergeyevna left Lopakhin along with Mother, she asked you to.... Is it true that you undertook to look after Uncle?"

I stopped in my tracks, from the unexpectedness of it. But he took me by the arm and we walked briskly along the rough, rolling path to the ravines, where we could see a black shed standing on piles, with smoky flames blazing up in a hollow underneath it. This was the salt works.

"Of course, you were only a girl, and they oughtn't to have left him to you to look after. But didn't you suggest it yourself? Is that true? I realize that you didn't offer to do it for money."

Andrei bit his lip and looked at me in a scared sort of way. I understood then that he hadn't wanted to mention money and it had slipped out by mistake.

"I've thought a lot about him all these years. I've realized that I behaved with criminal negligence—criminal, because he was seeking somebody amongst us to whom he would be able to pass on his work, his ideas. And I don't even know what became of his manuscripts. Do you have them?"

"Yes."

The salt works were not far off now, and through the wide-flung gates, against the background of smoky-red flames breaking out from somewhere, we could see dark figures of men standing still.

"And, you know, he did a lot for you. I've often thought about that," he said, taking up the conversation again. "And then, when he was left alone.... Of course, it's nonsense to say that he died because of somebody," he said hurriedly. "But, you understand ... it was very hard for me, and when you didn't reply I decided not to write to you any more."

We approached the salt works. Under the tumbledown shed women were pumping water from a well, and this ran along a wooden chute through a small yard into the salt works. A dark, hairy man with a stick in his hand stood by the cauldron in which the salt was being boiled, and everything around was lit up by the sombre gleam of the flames.

This was only the beginning of our talk, broken off because I was so stunned that at first I couldn't find anything to say in reply. Why had Glafira Sergeyevna slandered me? She had made up a whole story, according to which I had pleaded with her for a long time to leave Pavel Petrovich in my care, swearing that I would look after him like the apple of my eye. Then, when the old doctor had been left alone by her departure, I never once went to see him, and he fell seriously ill and died without a kind word, without help and without a friend. All this she claimed to have heard from somebody in Lopakhin who was indignant about my behaviour.

Had Agnia Petrovna believed this story? It turned out that she had. That astonished me! For Agnia Petrovna had known and liked Mother, and I had got into the habit of respecting her, though I felt that at bottom she was a weak person and easily fell under the influence of others. And Mitya? Had Mitya believed it?

I don't remember a time in my life when I came down on anybody with such vigour as the night I came down on Andrei.

I told him everything—I'd never realized before I had such a good memory.

I told him how Glafira Sergeyevna had demanded that Agnia Petrovna should immediately move to Moscow, for the purpose, of course, of leaving her free to do as she liked. How, looking greedily around, she had taken all the lumber down from the loft, and then spent a long time haggling with the junk-man, who even spat when he left and said that it was the first time in his life that he had met such a cunning rogue. How the old doctor looked younger with the hope that lit up his face when he read me his letter beginning: "Dear Vladimir Ilyich." How he was shaken by that Korovin's opinion. How he had said that he had "no time to live," and how before his death he beckoned somebody to him with a feeble hand but whoever he was beckoning wasn't there, only a solitary girl who didn't know how to make his last moments easier.

I stopped. My cheeks were aflame, and I felt that my temperature must be not less than 102. We had eaten nothing since lunch. I wanted to make coffee when we returned to the bath-house, but Andrei for some reason didn't want me to, and we sat silent, mournfully eating an excessively salt herring, after which we so much wanted to drink that I did make coffee after all.

Andrei talked now, and it was my turn to listen to him—to listen and to become excited because what he told me deeply disturbed and affected me.

* * *

I had imagined that it would be very hard to find the explanation of what had happened four years before in the Lvov family. But it was not hard at all. The only thing needed was to know Glafira Sergeyevna, and Andrei now knew her much better than I. It was the end of the former family which had been headed by Agnia Petrovna, and the beginning of a new one, in which Glafira Sergeyevna naturally assigned the leading role to herself. At that time, in Lopakhin, she had only started on her task, perhaps a little more resolutely than the circumstances warranted; she had started and, having made a mistake, immediately put the blame on me. Andrei put this a little differently, but I guessed all his allusions and hints. He drew a portrait of a changed, aging Agnia Petrovna—

"You wouldn't recognize her." Behind those words, "You wouldn't recognize her," I saw Glafira Sergeyevna, confident, smiling politely, her eyes motionless and gloomy in her beautiful, pale face. "As regards your affairs, Mummy. . . ." Now she ran the household, and ran it, in Andrei's words, sensibly and authoritatively in the highest degree. Mitya obeyed her; only on one question had she met determined resistance from him and given in after a long struggle. Glafira Sergeyevna wanted him to work in a private hospital which some big doctor-businessman had opened in the Tverskaya. But Mitya refused, declaring that he would devote himself to science. He worked up the notes on typhus which he had collected during the war, and read a paper on the subject, a very good one, so that he was offered appointments at two institutes at once. Now Glafira Sergeyevna was even glad that he had decided to devote himself to science.

"Altogether, I don't think he can be under any illusions about the sort of person she is," said Andrei, sadly, "just as I had very little doubt even before I knew what you've told me about her. But he can't live without her and that's never likely to change. . . . What was I saying? Oh, yes. Recently he's been working on viruses, and in my opinion something interesting will come of it, though, as usual, he's anticipating things."

As I listened I had a strange feeling that Mitya and Andrei had changed places. Mitya had now become the younger brother and Andrei the elder. Never before would he have said that "Mitya's biggest trouble is that he's a fine orator" and that "he spends too much time making a noise in the world."

"But, wait a minute," Andrei was gathering his thoughts. "He was certainly intending to look you up in Leningrad."

"Why?"

"I read over one of Uncle's lectures to him—you know, about Ivanovsky—and he wanted to know whether you'd kept Uncle's papers."

He stopped speaking. On the window-sill stood a jam-jar with test-tubes sticking out of it. Mechanically he picked up one of them and held it up to the light. Then he put it back, but stayed by the window. That went on for a long time—he standing and staring out of the window, through which the diffused light of dawn was already arising out of the white dusk of the northern night, and I sitting on the stool by the table and doodling silently.

Andrei turned. He looked cheerful, but I knew he was agitated because there was a brilliant, amazingly clear light in his eyes.

"Oh, well, what difference does it make?" he said. "In the long run, what's Glafira Sergeyevna to us? I'm ashamed that I could ever have believed her, but you know how it is. Everything in the world seemed to me extraordinarily beautiful, and you were the mistress of that splendid, beautiful world. That's why what I learnt from Glafira Sergeyevna hurt me so terribly. What must I do to be forgiven?"

This was like our leave-taking in Lopakhin, when we strolled along the riverside, and suddenly the old Andrei disappeared somewhere, and in his place appeared a new, pale, soaring Andrei with an inspired, radiant look. I wanted to kiss him, but I only got up and stretched out my hand.

We went out. The rosy dawn was rising over the horizon, and all around us—the village street climbing up the hillside, the church and the church fence, and the women hanging out their washing on the fence—all was tinted by a pink light ranging through all shades, from the delicate one which barely touched the motionless clouds in the sky to the dark one which began at our feet and stretched to the distant, irregular line of the ridge. I glanced at Andrei. With his eyes half-closed and his head lifted, smiling with a childishly solemn, kindly expression, he was gazing where, slowly blotting out everything rosy on earth and in the sky, the sun was rising as though with a clean, shining morning face.

All that I had heard from Andrei seemed to me to be somehow "shifted," or, as photographers say, "out of focus." Our relations in general must have been "out of focus," too, from the moment we met at Anzersk Settlement, though, busy from morning to night, we were only vaguely aware of this. Now everything had fallen into place and, incidentally, I only now appreciated how really splendidly Andrei conducted the medical service in Anzersk Settlement. There wasn't a hospital yet, but the house where it was to be was almost finished, and fully up-to-date, though small, and it was to be opened very soon. This was a difficult business, and I learned with surprise how vigorously, nay ruthlessly, Andrei dealt with people who obstructed his work, to which he, quite rightly, ascribed great political importance.

There had been no new patients for a long time, and the old ones were getting better. Andrei and I now went for walks quite often, and he, so to speak, showed me round Anzersk Settlement. Nearly all the houses were decorated with wood carvings—little horses and towers—and some of them had their shutters painted with extraordinary artistry. On the whole, Andrei had managed to acquire a good knowledge of northern folk art, and talked so interestingly about it that it was a delight to listen to him, especially as I knew very little about such things. He had made a collection—distaffs ornamented with little stars and crosses alternating with figures of fabulous birds, boxes made of bone with lids engraved like the most delicate lace, and so forth. Now he suddenly had the idea of giving the entire collection to me, but I accepted only an embroidered towel, which pleased me because of its simple, graceful design.

In short, Anzersk Settlement was a real "museum of the past," but behind this façade decorated with artistic ornamentation there was, as Andrei said, a far more complicated ornamentation of intricate relationships, malice, spite and grudges. Six months previously, a "joint fishing *artel*" had been organized there. What misfortune fell to the lot of that artel, which was joined by twelve families of poor fisherfolk! First their best seine-nets disappeared without trace, then the village Soviet insisted that the *artel* give up one of its boats to carry the mails. There was only one way to increase the catch two or three times over, and that was to acquire a motor-boat, and with great difficulty Andrei obtained in Arkhangelsk this "tractor for fishing." But then, at the height of the fishing season, the motor broke down, though the *artel* members had looked after it carefully. It was war, unceasing and ruthless, and it was hard to win it, especially since Mitrofan Berezhnoi who, as a well-known boatbuilder in the North and chairman, wielded considerable influence in the village Soviet. He owned at least twice as much fishing tackle as the entire *artel*, and had long since sent his sons out fishing in a motor-boat.

"But we won this war, nevertheless," said Andrei. "I say 'we' because I'm not alone here, of course. If you had come not in summer, when the men have gone off to work, but in winter, I should have introduced you to some people with tremendous integrity, energy and political flair."

This conversation took place at the "stockade," as they called a half-tumbleddown building by the Anzerka, the curious, five-cornered shape of which might still be divined from the remains of the mighty logs, that were more than four arms' length in girth. Beyond the "stockade" began the woods, which merged in the distance with the woods along the seashore.

"Then you'd have understood," Andrei went on, "how sharply everything that happens in our country is reflected here, even though there's probably no more out-of-the-way spot than this settlement 170 miles from the railway. At first sight you might think that it's a thousand years since anything happened in those sheltered yards, within those gates over which (I showed you, I think?) they still keep their crosses and icons. But in fact—do you know what an impression, for instance, was made here by the news that bombs had been thrown into the Party Club in Leningrad? It was as though those bombs had gone off in the bath-house where I treat the sick. But there's another point of view, too; you know what I mean. When the news reached us about the cowardly murder of Voikov, you should have seen how revived and how many years younger Mitrofan Berezhnoi's face looked when he showed me that issue of the paper. He 'sympathized,' of course, but I knew what that sympathy of his was worth! Do you suppose he doesn't keep up with international affairs? He works them out on the abacus: the Arcos raid—profit; the victory of the People's Revolutionary Army in China—loss."

There was nothing unexpected in what Andrei had said, so why did I feel as though until then I had been walking along an open road, bathed in sunshine, but now suddenly I had stumbled on the edge of a precipice down which it was frightening to look? "Frightening, but necessary," said Andrei, when I told him, not very coherently, of this idea of mine.

"I don't know where you got this feeling of light-heartedness," he went on. "You're slipping, Tanya, that's what it is. It's odd, because when you were still only a girl I was amazed sometimes by the way you could see the other side of things. We are working—think about that word—and we oughtn't to have any illusions that life demands nothing of us beyond knowledge of medical matters. When I was at the Institute I saw quite clearly how a process of crystallization was going on; on one side ourselves, the Komsomols, our whole group numbering not more than a hundred, and on the other the old type of students, and in between, the mass of waverers who gradually came over to us. I don't doubt that the same sort of thing is going on at your place, although, of course, at a different level of development. For me the fact that I was a Komsomol member was the axis around which my life revolved, and I began to see the other side of things. And what about you?"

We had been talking for a long time, for three hours, when a monotonous noise of water broke into our conversation; we had reached the Krutitsky rapids. Whirling wildly, the water was rolling along in a huge white log, which fell over the falls with a crash, breaking on a rock, while after it, boiling and frothing, another one was already rolling. . . .

What didn't Andrei and I talk about! We discussed every year, every month, nay, every day which had passed since Andrei, in a cab with the hood thrown back, had travelled away "into the future." And it seemed to me that our night-time conversation of long ago was still going on, now breaking off, now renewed.

Mashenka was sometimes present when we talked, and a vague idea that she wasn't listening to it without interest came into my head when I glanced at her meek, tender face, with its pale pink cheeks which flushed a faint red. And then I recalled how Mashenka had got so agitated and had all but fainted when Andrei was doing that intubation and the tube with the splash of spittle flew straight into his face. He had asked Mashenka to hold the light nearer as he was examining the boy's throat, and the candle lit up such a concerned face, with such alarmed, anxiously-blinking eyes! Still, there was nothing in our friendly conversation which was not for Mashenka's ears.

Not a word more was said about Glafira Sergeyevna. Andrei mentioned only that he had written to Mitya to tell him that we had met, and to notify him that I should be returning to Leningrad within a few days.

"At the end of July Mitya will be in Leningrad for a congress," he explained, "and you can tell him the whole story yourself. I wrote to him only this: 'you'll hear something that will surprise you.' But here's what I wanted to warn you about. It will be a heavy blow to him, because. . . . You can't imagine how much he loves her. So you'll have to find an indirect way of telling him about it. Not so abruptly as you told me. All right?"

I nodded.

"All the more that he'll realize quite well that now Glafira Sergeyevna and I can't have anything to do with each other. Then there's another thing. I'm a bit afraid that he'll listen to what you say and then ask, 'But where are Pavel Petrovich's papers now? Have they been preserved? Don't you think that they ought long ago to have been handed over to his family?' "

I replied coldly, "Well! It won't be hard to answer that question."

"No doubt. You'll answer him and you'll quarrel. And I.... You must appreciate that I very much want you two not to quarrel."

Andrei gave me a quick glance. His brows were lifted, his eyes opened wide, and it was as if something deeply hidden suddenly looked joyfully out at me from their bright depths with a childlike radiance....

It couldn't be denied that I had carried out the work with which Nikolai Vasilyevich had entrusted me, but the results obtained were queer, not only from the microbiological but also simply from the logical point of view.

How shall I describe my first feelings when I gazed at the foggy picture made up of those half-successful experiments, arguments with Andrei, doubts and, at last, stubborn efforts to finish the work? It was like early morning in the mountains—everything indefinite, haze-covered, with changing ambiguous outlines.

I said that the experiments were half-successful, but so far as Nikolai Vasilyevich's idea was concerned they were simply failures. What he had said to me before I left was, "Once upon a time I thought about streptococci intensifying the toxicity of diphtheria. Now you put your mind to it." According to my experiments, however, streptococci didn't intensify the toxicity of diphtheria at all. On the contrary, one could say that the streptococcus and the bacillus which caused diphtheria were on bad terms, and were always thinking how to do mischief to each other. Of course, of the many streptococci this was strictly true only of one, but on the other hand this one not only did not intensify but actually reduced, and even in some cases stopped the growth of the diphtheria microbe.

Maybe, if these experiments had been carried out not in the bath-house but in the microbiology department, if the test-tubes had stood in holders and not in jam-jars, if the incubator which Andrei had made for himself not long before my arrival had not had an ordinary petrol lamp under it, and if the drying cupboard had not been housed in an ordinary cooking-stove, we might have had more certainty that, contrary to common sense, diphtheria could be cured with the streptococci of tonsillitis. Anyway, this was a fact, existing so far, it was true, only in test-tubes, but with some basis for its truth to be affirmed as valid in the wider field of action, in the human body. . . .

The terrible news of the earthquake in the Crimea reached us at Anzersk Settlement. Every day the newspapers carried correspondents' stories, photographs, eye-witness accounts. Andrei was alarmed about what might have happened to a friend of his who was working at a hospital in Yalta, and only calmed down when he got a telegram from him. It was difficult to imagine that an earthquake might happen in Leningrad, and still more difficult to suppose that my presence could ward it off, but I began (why, I don't know) to hurry to get home.

That was how things were when one evening as I sat in the bath-house, clad in my dressing-gown, writing up my work, Andrei entered quickly, put a letter in front of me, said "Good night" in a sort of hollow voice, and went out again.

At first I thought that this letter must be from Leningrad, but no, on the envelope was written merely "Tanya." I opened it.

"Dear, good, darling Tanya, it's a terrible thing for me not only to lie to you but even to think that you might not believe me, that's why I don't want to try to persuade you that I have always loved you, that is, even when we were in Lopakhin, though I think I did love you. I've asked myself—suppose we hadn't known each other since childhood and had first met here in Anzersk Settlement? What would have been different? Only one thing: I shouldn't have tormented myself so long, checking on myself, fearing I might be mistaking old friendship for love. No, this is love which I feel with all my heart, which is all for you, Tanya dear! Sometimes I've been afraid and troubled by this feeling, for it seemed as if you could never love me. But there were moments of unexpected happiness, too, when I felt nearly convinced that no letter would be needed, that there would be just one word and then you yourself would say that you believed in my love and shared it. But time has gone by, and in the end I thought it was terrible that you should go away without our saying this last word to each other. Now I await it from you.

"Ever yours, Andrei."

## A TERRIBLE MOMENT

I read the letter, and did not pause a second before rereading it, as though after the last page the first one recurred. A multitude of feelings rushed into my heart—amazement, confusion, embarrassment, mixed with regret—and whirled around in it. We were friends, and it was not a passing friendship but a true, long-standing one, the kind where, concealing nothing, one can talk to one's friend about one's most secret dreams. Why was it so hard for me to go to him and say that I looked upon him as a friend? Because Andrei—dear, good Andrei, who strove to explain everything in the world to himself and others, Andrei through whose eyes I had grown accustomed since childhood to look for the most important thing in life—would suddenly prove to be far away, and I would lose him for ever.

I jumped up and paced the room, grasping the letter in my hand.

"Perhaps you do love him?"

Of course, if I had loved anybody before it would have been possible to compare my feelings then and now. But I only thought about various theories, such as the one which I had often expounded to Nina, that love is a sort of talent, like art or science. It couldn't be said that I was unable to live without Andrei, though undoubtedly it would be deadly dull when we parted, for an indefinite time, too. Here in Anzersk Settlement, whenever we had been apart for two or three hours I already felt impelled to go and see what he was doing and whether he needed help, and at that moment he would often be coming to see me with the same idea. But still, that wasn't enough for me to say "yes" to him.

And then I imagined myself going to the hut where Andrei had made his quarters since my arrival (till then he had both lived and worked in the bath-house) and standing in the doorway with my hands outstretched. With what tenderness he would take them, kiss them and press them to his burning cheeks. And we would begin to talk, quickly, incoherently, not knowing what we talked about, except that it was about things that previously had concerned only him or only me, but now concerned us both. We would talk about how we'd get to work in that little bath-house and how with time it would become a real laboratory: did great discoveries not come out of obscure villages as well? I had nobody, except my father, who was infinitely remote from me, but now I should have a husband. A husband—what a strange word!

Grandad Voronin was already stumping about in his big boots in the passage, the dawn was rising over Anzersk Settlement, and I was still busy with my foolish thoughts, which now blazed up and now died down into darkness, like shadows thrown up by a flame.

So I prepared nothing, but, firmly convinced that Andrei would see me and at once realize that I had come to say no to him, I approached the hut where he slept and knocked gently on the window. Nobody answered; only in my heart, in response to the cautious knock, there echoed an equally cautious "No."

"Is he asleep?" I wondered. But Andrei always got up very early. I knocked once again, then went into the porch and looked into the passage. Mashenka was standing there, pale and worried.

"What's the matter?"

"Andrei Dmitriyevich is ill."

"What's the matter with him?"

"I don't know. His temperature's very high. 104."

* * *

What Andrei had was nothing like diphtheria, which occurs very rarely in adults and, when it does, takes its course so easily that doctors often confuse it with catarrhal sore throat. He had no cough, his throat was hardly affected, he swallowed freely, and in fact there was nothing except a headache, followed from time to time by an excitement which frightened Mashenka and me. But every evening his temperature went up to 104 and then fell sharply before the morning, and that was bad because Andrei, despite his strong, thickset build, had a small heart, considerably smaller than the normal. He found the fever hard to bear, and I thought that this was the cause of his trouble. For the first three days, however, nothing special happened, except for a frightful argument when Mashenka and I set upon him, asking him to give us permission to inject some serum into him, and he wouldn't agree. Three years before, when he was practising near Batumi, he had gone down with malaria for the first time and it had recurred every summer since then. "It's malaria," he said, obstinately, and when we tried to point out that he might easily have caught something from that boy on whom he had carried out an intubation the day I arrived, he laughed and advised us to study the theory of probability—such a science exists. Eventually I did inject some serum into him, but only on the fourth day, when he lost consciousness.

I had listened more than once to delirium. Mother, for instance, used to babble some nonsense whenever she had a very slight rise in temperature. But I had never heard such a strange delirium as this.

Now Andrei thought that he was at a railway station: the train was late, and he was in a hurry. Then he was waiting to be examined; they called him in, but he wasn't ready, he hadn't managed to read the last page. But all this was not what he was actually expecting when consciousness returned.

"Did I talk a lot of nonsense again?" he asked wearily, when he came to, and it broke my heart to meet those big, childishly rounded eyes in the thin face.

"You'll go away and we shan't say the last word to each other"—that was what I read in his anxious, uncertain gaze.

And what could I say in reply, when in fact it was just during those nights when I was sitting by his bedside in that stuffy hut, in the weak light of the table-lamp, that I realized that although he was infinitely dear to me, this wasn't love, it just wasn't love! And Mitya had nothing to do with this, even if he had once attracted me! Mitya, to whom I had hardly spoken a dozen words in all my life!

I had a feeling as though I were travelling in a sleigh along a wintry road, by moonlight, with him: I don't know with whom—with the man I loved. All around was silence, the woods were quiet under the snow. We were going—where? What did it matter? If only the sleigh-bell would go on ringing and the clouds of snow would go on flying from under the horses' feet. If only the trees by the side of the road would keep on flashing past, shaggy, half-asleep, in the bluish light of the moon. If only he would go on staying beside me. The frost-covered rug slips off my knees, he adjusts it, wraps it round my legs, "Well, my dearest, my joy? Are you cold? Why don't you speak? Say something. Do you love me?" and I just laugh and tell him "no," though I love him so much it doesn't seem possible that love could be stronger.

"Are you tired, Tanya? I'll sit with Andrei Dmitrieyevich and you can go to your place."

And it all faded away. I was sitting in a dark hut by the bedside of a sick man, and cotton wool and bandages showed vaguely white on the chair. Mashenka, pale, thin, making no sound, had cautiously roused me.

When she slept I don't know; she didn't seem to sleep at all. There was a lot of work to be done in the settlement; the convalescents had to be watched and patients received. Mashenka helped me, but she was only a shadow of that energetic, attentive, tender, gently insistent Mashenka that she had been with Andrei.

The day before, a doctor had come over from V—sk, and after spending a long time examining Andrei had said that it really was malaria that he had, along with catarrhal sore throat. I made no answer, except to shrug my shoulders, and he bawled us out for not having sent Andrei to hospital before, as though V—sk were just across the way and it hadn't been a question of sending a man who was seriously ill more than sixty miles over a bad road.

"You must send a telegram to his family," were the only intelligent words that I heard from this man.

And I was already quite prepared to send a telegram to Mitya when Andrei suddenly got much better.

"What a moustache," he said good-naturedly of the doctor from V—sk. "Did you give him something to eat?"

And he started to joke about our experiments, from which it had appeared that one could treat diphtheria with the aid of tonsillitis.

"But mind you don't make an experimental animal out of me," he said, laughing. "We've known each other too long for that."

He drank some tea, ate a biscuit and an egg, and demanded that I should tell him how our patients were getting on. His temperature went down towards evening, and for the first time fell to normal. In short, it was quite a good day, and I considered that I had acted very wisely in putting off sending the telegram till the next day.

After eight o'clock Andrei dozed off and Mashenka drove me away, because the previous night I'd been so worked up about the doctor from V—sk that I hadn't slept a wink. I remember that when I got back to the bath-house I thought: What did I most want to do, eat or sleep? And I decided that I wanted to sleep.

I must have got very tired during those anxious days, for never before had I gone to sleep so quickly. It was like falling into a soft, dark abyss. That's how it was this evening, too. But somebody started to shout over my head when I had hardly gone off; that distressed me. Somebody had burst into the bath-house, rushed up to me and was saying in an agitated voice, "Wake up! He's dying!"

I opened my eyes. Mashenka stood beside me, barefoot, with a shawl flung round her bare shoulders.

"He's dying! Oh, he's dying!"

"What's the matter?"

"He's dying," she repeated. "Oh, he's very bad. Come, come!"

I don't know what happened to me at that moment. I pushed Mashenka aside so hard that she nearly fell down, and ran to the door; then, turning back at the threshold, began hunting in the trunk for a new syringe-needle.

It came back to me that I had taken it to Andrei three days before, and I rushed towards the door. The dressing-gown in which I'd been sleeping caught on the key sticking in the lock and was torn....

Andrei lay without a pillow, his head thrown back, stretched out, his eyes half-closed. Dawn was already breaking—I had only imagined that I hadn't slept—and how frightening his pale face looked in this sharp morning light!

The hut was in disorder, with blankets lying on the floor. It was obvious that the woman of the house had been preparing to tidy up and hadn't succeeded. Now she was standing to one side. A child cried, and she hastily picked it up out of bed.

"Andrei, what's the matter with you? Do you feel faint? Open your eyes! Wake up! Do you hear me?"

As though it were in the power of my will to stop that terrible thing which had drawn near to him and was already hidden in those blankets thrown on the floor, in the fact that the woman of the house, her eyes sullenly cast down, was rocking the child in her arms—that was how I kissed and caressed Andrei.

"My darling, my joy!" It was all the same to me what I said, provided they were the most affectionate words in the world. "Breathe more deeply! Do you hear me? Do you think I'll let you get worse? That silly girl Mashenka frightened me."

I knew I had to give him a camphor injection at once and I called out to Mashenka, who had returned to the hut, to get the syringe ready. But her hands shook so much that I seized the syringe and began to get it ready myself. I did it slowly because my hands shook, too. Still, though clumsily, I managed to inject some camphor into him.

"He's dying," the woman of the house whispered, crossing herself.

Losing control of myself, I fell upon her and Mashenka chased them out, and then flung open the window and knelt by Andrei's bedside.

What more could I say to him? What could I do that he might wake up and open his eyes, that he shouldn't be so terribly, deathly pale, as though his jaw were outlined with chalk?

"Can you hear me? It was hard for me to answer your letter because I've never been in love with anybody before. I didn't sleep till morning when I'd read it, I kept thinking that I had nobody in the world but you! I won't keep anything from you, or you from me, and everything will be fine!"

Andrei sighed. His eyelids quivered and opened. He had heard me. I thought he smiled and I burst into tears.

They fell directly on his face; I was frightened and wiped them away, but against my will they kept on falling while I shifted his position, took his temperature and listened to his heart, which sounded louder with every beat, as if it were returning from somewhere far away.

* * *

The whole of the following day I never left Andrei's side. He was so weak that he had to be fed with a spoon; he couldn't lift his hand. He was suddenly seized with talkativeness—he talked and talked in a voice which was barely audible, and fell asleep in the middle of a word. I gave him water—cold, pure, straight from the well. He drank a few spoonfuls and said with a happy smile, "How good it tastes!" Absolutely everything put him in an emotional state: he gazed at the little daughter of the woman of the house with eyes brimming with joy. This was convalescence. According to Rosenberg's *Textbook of Infectious Diseases*, which I had been studying not long before, a dangerous crisis is often followed by a "super-sentimental mood."

Neither then nor later, when Andrei began to sit up in bed, had I any clear notion of what exactly had happened between us. Nothing had happened! It was just that I had lost my head when I saw his face with the jaw stuck out like that—I had seen my fill of such jaws in the anatomical theatre!—and from fear had uttered a lot of affectionate words. Yet something had happened: why, if not, the moment I went in to see him now, did we both begin to feel a sort of change which compelled us to be a little shy with each other?

It was as though an invisible violin string had been drawn between us, and from time to time Andrei would involuntarily touch it, as he talked with me about the most ordinary things, himself listening with intent happiness to the sound as it died away.

But this was a strange thing: it was as though my answer to Andrei's letter acquired greater power over me, too, with every day that passed. Willingly or not, I had promised Andrei that I would become his wife, and this promise came to me—actually came to me, like a person—every night, the moment I found myself alone. And two "I's", one rational and cold-blooded and the other impetuous and emotional, began to carry on a conversation between themselves.

"You've known Andrei many years," said the first, the rational I. "You've never met a nobler, better, cleverer man."

"But some day," I timidly replied to myself, "I may have to tell Andrei that that's only half the truth?"

"Years pass and a half-truth becomes a truth. You'll go forward together, supporting each other, studying and working. But what about Mitya?" I thought suddenly.

And I recalled how I had taken Mitya to Glashenka's when he came to Lopakhin after the Civil War and how, when she recognized him, she cried out in a low, ringing voice, "Mitya!" and how after that I had run through the sleeping, deserted streets vowing that I would never love anybody. "When I lay exhausted on the wet sand after crossing the Anzerka and the proximity of death had driven away everything that I'd lived by up to that time," I thought, "why did I start to think so bitterly about Mitya?"

And suddenly this conversation began to seem to me a sort of mirage. What nonsense had I been thinking? What did it matter if, years before, when I was still a child, I had been fond of Mitya? Weren't there others I had liked? What about that young doctor from the Army Medical Academy with whom I went to the Moscow Art Theatre touring company's shows? No, no! Everything would be fine! And finally—could I bring myself to take back my word, which I'd given to Andrei and which, it seemed, was playing an invisible part in the fact that every day he was getting better?

Only one thing somewhat saddened me: since the moment I had decided that everything would be fine the future seemed somehow vague in spite of the fact that it should have been as clear and pure as was Andrei with his clarity and purity. I could not escape the unpleasant feeling that my life had suddenly veered off the path I had picked for it and that I was treading where everything was dim and seemed to be uncertain and unstable.

It was time to go back to Leningrad. I should have returned there long since if it hadn't been for Andrei's illness. In the middle of August an All-Union Congress of Bacteriologists and Medical Officers was to be held in Leningrad and I wanted to be present at it, especially as Nikolai Vasilyevich was to read a paper to the Congress.

Mitya replied to Andrei's letter that he would be very glad to hear from me "something which would surprise him." He was going to the Congress and asked whether I was going to be in Leningrad in mid-August.

But there were also other and not less important reasons which obliged me to hurry back. Nikolai Vasilyevich was to have come to an agreement with the Dean's office whereby my journey to Anzersk Settlement would be regarded as my practical work between my fourth and fifth years. With his usual carelessness he had neglected to do this, and now, as Olya Tropinina wrote to me, my transfer to the fifth year course was coming up against unexpected difficulties. A visit to my father was long overdue: he wrote that "Avdotya Nikonovna is seriously ill, but keeps hoping that Tanya will come and cure her." There was another reason why I had to go to Lopakhin. I had to fetch the trunk with the old doctor's papers which my father was looking after, and give it to Mitya.

The car from V—sk was to arrive early in the morning and, after packing, I did the round of all my patients. Andrei was sitting up in bed in a white, open-necked shirt from which his pathetically thin neck protruded. His quiff of hair, which he had always kept neatly cut, stuck out in all directions.

"It's a pity that I shan't be able to go to the Congress," he said. "True, Molchanov" (that was the name of the head of the public health department) "could manage to give me leave in August. After all, I have been seriously ill."

"Do you think he will agree?"

"It's hardly likely . . . Tanya," after a silence, Andrei went on, "you and I still haven't talked about . . . how everything's going to be. You know what I mean?"

"Yes, I know," I replied, quietly.

"Well, this is what I wanted to say to you. I'm tormented by a question which perhaps has already been answered. Did you. . ."—he was troubled—"did you answer my letter?"

"Why yes, of course I did."

"You see, it struck me that you'd never spoken to me so tenderly before as you did that night. Tell me," and he looked me straight in the face, "were you afraid that I was dying and was that why you spoke to me?"

"No."

Andrei hung his head.

"I'm frightened, but not for myself," he said wistfully. "Because if you only loved me a little—that would be happiness for me all the same. But you might have made a mistake and unconsciously mistaken one feeling for another. It's silly for me to talk like this, isn't it? But you see—I know that at that moment you felt sorry for me from the bottom of your heart."

Mashenka came in, excused herself, ran away, and we talked about something else. I don't know whether Andrei noticed that her eyes were red with weeping. He must have noticed it, because he became thoughtful, without letting go of my hands.

"Do you know what I'm thinking?" he said when, at last, I made to say good-bye to him. "It's that I don't know you very well, after all. Just now, for instance, it seems to me that you are preoccupied, uncertain, that you speak and don't listen to yourself. Am I wrong?"

"Of course you're wrong."

"But promise me that when you're in Leningrad you'll go on thinking about the moment when you thought I was dying."

What could I say in reply?

There was nobody in the hut, we embraced and I kissed him hard. I needed nobody else but him—so dear, so kind, so handsome (I kept on forgetting that he was very handsome). Of course, I loved him. What else could I call that warmth which belonged to Andrei and which I began to feel the moment I thought of him?

## *Chapter IV*

## FAREWELL TO YOUTH

### HOMECOMING

I don't know why, when I returned to Leningrad, I didn't tell anybody that I was going to get married. Perhaps because it seemed a bit funny: she went off to deal with an epidemic, and within a couple of months she came back, engaged. But there was another reason, too. Even while I was on the train, everything that had happened between Andrei and me at Anzersk Settlement seemed to be moving further and further away from me; not into the past, however, but forward, as though my promise to marry him would be fulfilled in ten years' time.

This worried me, but what could I do with my foolish heart? "This is for now," I thought, counting up all the multitude of things which had accumulated while I was away from Leningrad, "and that is for later on." Now I had to present myself with my report to the department and put myself right with the Dean. I should have to give an account of my trip to Anzersk Settlement very soon at an open meeting of the Komsomol organization of the Institute. Amongst all these duties and worries there floated vaguely my meeting with Mitya, if he were to come to the Congress.

It was an open meeting of the Komsomol organization, but nearly the whole year were coming (they had just returned from vacation) and I felt instinctively that I must without fail deal with those vital questions which could not but concern students at a medical institute. On the eve of the meeting I went to see Lyosha Dmitriyev at the committee office, but he, I don't know why, once more postponed the conversation which we were to have had before I set off on my journey. That worried me, too. Dmitriyev was chairing the meeting, and during my talk I caught myself more than once looking at him with uneasiness.

I had a plan for my talk, and I spoke according to numbered points, coherently, it seems, but among other things the comrades said later that there was a lack of balance between the "scientific" and the social sides of my report. I felt this myself, when I suddenly realized that my comrades of the fifth year were more interested in the living and working conditions of a young doctor in a remote spot like Anzersk Settlement than in measures for combating diphtheria, which they could read about in any textbook on infectious diseases.

This became finally clear when, in answering some question or other, I started to talk about Andrei. When preparing my talk I had decided not to mention him, or at the most to refer to him as "the local doctor." But it turned out that this wasn't possible, and I was even obliged to deal briefly with his biography. I did this with the involuntary feeling that everybody would guess why I blushed, got confused and spoke of "the local doctor" in such an unnaturally casual tone. Nothing happened, however, and I was soon completely mistress of myself. I told them how Andrei had to deal not only with medical matters, but also, for instance, with the affairs of a fishing *artel*. I mentioned Mitrofan Berezhnoi, sitting over books of the time of Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, and deeply convinced of the stability of his frightful world.

I spoke at length and in detail, exaggerating nothing, especially because, without any exaggeration, my story was not so much about the setting up of a medical service at Anzersk Settlement as about the struggle to consolidate Soviet rule in the countryside—a struggle which called for enormous vigour, resolution, will-power and yet another quality, which I had found so profoundly characteristic of

Andrei—a striving to ensure that nobody should do his job, however small it might be, better than he.

Now I passed on to the lessons to be drawn, and the idea that the struggle against diphtheria in an out-of-the-way village of the northern seaboard also had political importance began of itself to run through everything I had talked about. I avoided it, because it seemed to me that, by giving expression to this idea, I would be overestimating both my work and myself. I stumbled over it, nevertheless, with a running jump. A stir of interest passed through the audience, and I realized that without this idea my account would have been incomplete and wrong.

Perhaps there was no need to mention Lopakhin, but I had warmed to the subject and told them everything, how as a girl I had dreamed of "achieving something great in the name of the people and for their good," and how my trip had helped me to see the simple fact that we Komsomol members were the hope of the new, revolutionary world.

Emotion choked me and I closed with the words, "And this at a time when..." I had wanted to sketch the country's situation in general outline. But obviously they all realized quite well what I wanted to say; for they burst into applause, which broke out again louder than before when I awkwardly pronounced the concluding sentence which I had prepared beforehand:

"That is a brief account of my journey to investigate the diphtheria epidemic in Anzersk Settlement."

In the evening I went to the cell office, and Lyosha Dmitriyev said that they had all liked my talk very much. I asked:

"What about our interview?"

And he replied with a smile:

"There won't be any interview."

* * *

The young Chinese who was coming down the stairs in the microbiology department (it was Nikolai Vasilyevich's adopted son) smiled in a friendly way and said that his father was busy, he had visitors from Moscow with him. I went to the Dean's office and came back again, but the visitors had still not left. I drew my stipend, called at the trade-union committee, heard the latest news—and amongst the news was an unpleasant item: Lena Bystrova's father was very ill. The visitors were seated and, to judge from their voices as these reached me through the door, they were not preparing to leave very soon. What ought I to do? Nikolai Vasilyevich's collection stood in the little room which led into his study and I examined for the hundredth time those strange dolls carrying fans, and those ivory monkeys. Suddenly the door was flung open and Zaozersky came out, excited, his beard in disorder, wearing a new suit over a white shirt which was open all down his chest. Turning his head, he shouted back over the threshold of the room:

"And he'll be right, for he's a typical Nepman of science.... Ah, the traveller!" he said, when he saw me. "Well, how are things? Been back long?"

"Last night, Nikolai Vasilyevich. I wrote to you."

"I got your letter and didn't understand a word of it. This way, if you please," he said, taking me by the hand and leading me into the study. "Here's a young lady who says that she's discovered a streptococcus which suppresses Löffler's bacillus. What about that, eh?"

They had been smoking in the study, the smoke was slowly passing out of the open window, and flowers stood everywhere—Nikolai Vasilyevich bought them and people were always giving them to him. The round table, on which periodicals and books usually lay in disorder, was covered with a cloth, and at this table, on which were set *hors d'oeuvres*, wine and flowers, sat Mitya, smiling. On his right and left were some people who were smoking, laughing and staring at me with curiosity.

"I commend to you," said Nikolai Vasilyevich meanwhile, "this able girl, who has desired, in spite of my persuasions, to the contrary, to taste the bitter fruit of science. She's just come back from investigating the diphtheria epidemic at Anzersk Settlement. She's called Tanya," he explained, as though I were a little girl and too shy to give my own name. "We're listening to you. What did you think you would do and what did you do? Well?"

I was confused and stood without raising my eyes, but when Nikolai Vasilyevich spoke my name I glanced quickly at Mitya. He put down his glass on the table, hastily got up and looked at me, smiling politely. He hadn't recognized me. But that didn't last more than a moment. As I spoke, he began to scrutinize me as though he couldn't believe his eyes. . . . Then he turned his face away and a cold look came over it.

"I did practically nothing, Nikolai Vasilyevich. I took the serum there and helped the local doctor to inject it into both the sick and the healthy, that's all."

"Good girl!" said Nikolai Vasilyevich, delighted. "What a lass, eh? She's good, isn't she?"

"As regards Löffler's bacillus," I went on, "as you advised me. . . ."

And, repeating word for word what Nikolai Vasilyevich had advised me, I told how his suggestion had led me to the opposite result. At first my voice trembled a little and I felt now cold, now warm, but later on I grew quite calm, and, as I ended, I thought that it would have been almost impossible to tell the story better. Once, though, a feeling like that had let me down!

They listened to me attentively, especially Mitya. But Nikolai Vasilyevich didn't listen at all, he only looked at his visitors and with a pleased expression patted himself on the knee.

"Well, what do you think of that, eh?" he asked, when I stopped speaking. "There's a girl for you. It follows, then, that Löffler's bacillus. . . ."

And in two minutes he showed that I would not be able to confirm my results if I carried the experiment out more exactly. Without looking at me, Mitya began to raise objections to Nikolai Vasilyevich's case, and a dispute broke out, as though both of them had only been waiting for a suitable opportunity to attack each other fiercely.

At first I more or less followed the argument, but eventually I got muddled, terror-stricken that Nikolai Vasilyevich or Mitya would ask me something and I would prove to be an ignoramus.

Both of the disputants forgot me for such a long time that, after standing for a while in the middle of the room, I quietly drew back and sat down on the arm of an easychair.

As they were arguing I studied Mitya, and for the first time it struck me that I hardly knew him. What, in fact, if I had never happened to meet him before, would I have said about him?

The lower part of his face was determined and even harsh, but his eyes were pensive, with an absent-minded, kindly expression. He had changed little since Lopakhin days, except that he had filled out, and he seemed to be even taller than before. As of old, he carried himself in a soldierly way, and when he was wearing civilian clothes this manner was even more noticeable. There was something repellent and at the same time attractive about him, and this was clearly reflected in his face, so that he fully justified the well-known saying about the face being a mirror of the soul.

But the main thing about Mitya was a sort of energy which at the moment when I was watching him showed itself, in my view, first of all in an effort to defeat Zaozersky in argument, and secondly, in an effort not to quarrel with him. Several times he was on the point of flaring up, and mastered himself only with difficulty.

As a matter of fact, I grasped only one point in this long-drawn argument: Mitya intended to speak at the Congress against a certain Professor Kramov and Nikolai Vasilyevich was urging him not to.

"He's not a man, he's a slippery boa-constrictor," said Nikolai Vasilyevich. "It may be ten years later, but he'll steal up on you and strangle you without fail."

At last Nikolai Vasilyevich remembered me.

"Tanya, take a seat at the table," he said affectionately. "Have a glass of brandy! It's our own Chebotarka stuff, my fellow-countrymen sent it to me!"

I thanked him and declined.

"Don't be shy. You're thinking, 'they're professors,' that's what you're thinking. But we aren't professors, we're students, too, though old ones. We study, we argue, we pull each other's legs, and where a little ray of light glimmers we hurl ourselves upon it, yes, indeed we do! Like sheep!"

Everybody laughed, including me, though I still didn't sit at the table, especially as the visitors from Moscow were getting ready to go. Nikolai Vasilyevich firmly shook my hand and told me to bring my report and work to the department on the following day.

* * *

Mitya had pretended not to recognize me! He had not even asked after Andrei: that was a fine thing! Let's assume he didn't know that he was ill. All the same, he might have shown some interest in his brother. Very well, then. This was what I would do: I would send Pavel Petrovich's manuscripts from Lopakhin to Moscow by registered post, but would myself retain his personal letters. Pavel Petrovich had ordered me to burn these letters, so that I was not bound to turn them over to anybody, and certainly not to Mitya.

I found the treasurer of our students' commune, turned my stipend over to him and ran off homeward.

Mitya and I must have left the Institute at the same moment, I by the gate and he from the main building, because he suddenly appeared only a couple of steps behind me.

"Wait for me!"

I waited for him and we walked on together towards Lev Tolstoi Square.

"It wasn't convenient for me to talk to you at Nikolai Vasilyevich's," he said politely but, it seemed to me, with a shade of contempt. "Did they tell you that I called on you at the hostel during the spring?"

"No, nobody told me."

I was boiling.

"I must admit, it was hard to recognize you. In Lopakhin you were a little girl, but now ... it's extraordinary how much you've changed, and you've grown prettier."

I ought to have answered him with an ironical "Thank you," but the irony wouldn't come, for I was very angry.

"You wanted to talk to me about something, I believe? I don't suppose my appearance has anything to do with the matter you want to talk about, has it?"

He gave me a sideways glance.

"Yes, I wanted to talk to you. You were with Pavel Petrovich during the last days of his life. Tell me, when he died, with whom did he leave his papers? With you?"

"Yes."

"And don't you think," said Mitya, word for word as Andrei had feared that he would, "that you ought long ago to have handed them over to his family?"

I replied, "You are right, and so I should have done, if I had not been afraid that Pavel Petrovich's relations would have treated his papers with the same disgraceful neglect that they showed towards him."

This came out so well-roundedly that I was surprised at myself, though, as a matter of fact, I have always had the gift of uttering spiteful remarks very fluently. Mitya was amazed.

"What did you say?"

"I'm just going to tell you," I replied, with sang-froid. "First of all, though, may I know why you haven't asked me about your brother's health? Aren't you interested to know that he was at death's door for a whole week, and that when I left him he was still in bed?"

What happened then convinced me that Mitya was very fond of Andrei. He went pale, stopped in his tracks, and suddenly seized my hand with such violence that I nearly cried out with the pain.

"What do you mean, at death's door?"

"He's better now, much better."

"What was the matter with him—diphtheria?"

"If it was diphtheria it wasn't typical diphtheria," I replied, feeling that I was responsible for Andrei being ill, and at the same time angry with myself for having this stupid feeling. "*He* thought it was malaria."

"But how is he now?"

"He's getting better. He'll be up within the week."

"Why didn't he write to me about his illness? I had a letter from him before I left."

"What letter was that?" I asked, angrily. "The one in which he wrote: 'You will hear something that will surprise you'?"

We had passed my hostel long since and turned out of the square into Krasnye Zory Street, which was what Kirov Avenue was called in the 'twenties.

I had stressed my last words, and Mitya was silently looking at me, from head to toe, in both the literal and the figurative senses of that expression.

"I'm listening."

Our untimely talk about Andrei's illness had made it hard, I found, to recapture my previous angry, confident tone, which helped me to talk freely. This "I'm listening" of his was uttered in such an indifferent voice, however, that again I boiled over.

"I'll begin by saying that I want Glafira Sergeyevna to be present at our talk."

"Do you?"

Mitya winced—or was it just my fancy? Anyway, he took himself in hand at once.

"Well, that won't be hard to arrange," he said. "Glafira Sergeyevna is here in Leningrad with me and at this very moment" (he looked at his watch) "she is waiting for me at our hotel. Let's postpone our talk for ten minutes, and then you can tell me in her presence whatever it is that's going to surprise me."

## GLAFIRA SERGEYEVNA

We had walked as far as the Mosque. Mitya might have asked me something more than merely whether there had long been a bus running along Krasnye Zory Street. If I had been in his place, I should at least have been interested in a girl who had just come back from Arkhangelsk Region, where she had been working for a month and a half alongside his brother; a girl who had charge of the old doctor's manuscripts and could tell him more about them (and their author) than anybody else in the world. But what did such things amount to, I thought, in comparison with the feeling of scorn which overwhelmed Mitya? I should think so, too! Before him he saw a hypocrite who had begged that an old, feeble and sick person should be left in her care and then had abandoned him without looking after him. Very well, then.

Glafira Sergeyevna had a visitor, a middle-aged man with a round head, going bald, which he held a little on one side, with pale, pendulous cheeks and full, smiling lips. When Mitya opened the door, letting me go in first, this man got up, but Glafira Sergeyevna, who was sitting on a divan, wearing an attractive Japanese kimono, just calmly turned her head. She undoubtedly recognized me at the first glance.

"Hullo, Valentin Sergeyevich," said Mitya. "Look, Glashenka, don't you recognize her? It's our old acquaintance, Tatyana. . . ."

"Petrovna," I said.

"Take a seat, Tatyana Petrovna. Are we disturbing you?"

The visitor smiled. "On the contrary, Dmitri Dmitrich, you be the umpire between us. Glafira Sergeyevna says one can die of boredom in the Leningrad theatres. But last night I saw *The Empress' Conspiracy* at the Grand Drama Theatre, and it was a wonderful performance, I assure you. Instead of testifying, though, may I send you some tickets tomorrow, Glafira Sergeyevna?"

"I didn't say that one could actually die of boredom," Glafira Sergeyevna replied, "but they act so stiffly here, compared with Moscow."

In my opinion one can't say such a thing as: "act stiffly."

"No, you're absolutely wrong! With you it's always Moscow this and Moscow that. And what about the white nights? And the Neva? The Hermitage?" And he declaimed:

*The Neva now is clad in granite,*
*With many a bridge to overspan it;*
*The islands lie beneath a screen*
*Of gardens deep in dusky green.*

Do you remember?"

"Of course," said Glafira Sergeyevna, so hastily that I thought involuntarily, "You don't remember anything about it."

And they again fell to comparing the theatres of Moscow and Leningrad. The visitor praised the Academic Drama, the former Alexandrinsky Theatre, and Glafira Sergeyevna said that she had been to the play *In the Realm of Boredom* and people in the audience had said that the acting had fully justified the title. From time to time she would take up a book which lay before her; evidently it had something to do with the Alexandrinsky Theatre.

I felt nervous, but perhaps just because of that I noticed many things that otherwise would not have attracted my attention at all. First, I noticed that Glafira Sergeyevna had changed; whereas formerly she had been slim and lissom, now she was fat, and she had a deep wrinkle on her neck, under a double chin (I didn't miss anything). Despite her haughty airs she carried herself with a sort of tension, as though in the depths of her heart she was not sure that she had the right to sit in this fine hotel room and chat with such clever, educated people. Secondly, I noticed that Mitya did not like this sugary visitor of hers, and still less did he like the way Glafira Sergeyevna behaved towards him. Indeed, when she dropped her handkerchief, the visitor picked it up and returned it to her, and in acknowledgement Glafira Sergeyevna extended her hand, which he kissed gracefully.

Thirdly, I realized that I had fallen, without meaning to, into a circle of relationships which were in some way complex and confused. I sensed this in the excessively leisurely way the visitor talked, and the way Mitya was too obviously waiting for him to leave, and the way Glafira Sergeyevna put on an air of not noticing Mitya's displeasure, though it was clearly written all over his angry face. In fact they were all pretending, but especially Glafira Sergeyevna, who also had to show that she was perfectly indifferent to the fact that somebody called Tatyana Petrovna was sitting in the corner, patiently waiting for her conversation to end. "Why has this frightful slut, wearing a faded jacket and darned stockings, come to see me? What does she want with me? Can it be about that?" I could almost read her thoughts.

My stockings, by the way, were darned above the knees, but the places which had been darned felt all this time as though the darns were not in my stockings but in my legs.

The visitor said everything that he had to say politely, at length, and with flattery. His manner was so exaggeratedly flattering that I even wondered if he was laughing at Mitya.

He was evidently one of the microbiologists who had come for the Congress, but, like the Lvovs, had arrived a fortnight before it was due to open. These two weeks, I gathered from the meaningless phrases with which they parted, he had decided to devote to looking round Leningrad, which Glafira Sergeyevna had not previously visited.

"Why did he come?" Mitya asked angrily when the door had closed at last behind the visitor. "You know I can't bear that hypocrite. He really is a 'slippery boa-constrictor.' By the way, Zaozersky's just told me he's going to speak against me at the Congress."

Glafira Sergeyevna shrugged.

"Doesn't it occur to you that I knew that before you did? I invited Kramov precisely so that. . . ."

"What's that you say?"

I think I should have hidden myself under the bed if Mitya had suddenly advanced towards me with such an angry face.

"I've asked you a thousand times not to interfere in my affairs!" he exclaimed. His lips wouldn't obey him. "Surely you must realize that this puts me in a false position."

"You seem to have forgotten that we are not alone," said Glafira Sergeyevna meaningly.

"I beg your pardon!" Mitya quickly turned to me.

"Perhaps you would like me to go, Dmitri Dmitrich?"

"No, no! Talk to us, please. Glasha, Tatyana Petrovna has just returned from Anzersk Settlement. Andrei's been seriously ill, but he's better now. They were working together on diphtheria cases. Go ahead, Tatyana Petrovna."

* * *

"You see, it was like this," I began, calculating that, as always happened with me in examinations, I would calm down within five or ten minutes. "Andrei and I met by accident, and it's only thanks to this coincidence that I've learnt that I'm accused of having asked to be given care of Pavel

Petrovich in return for payment and then, when Glafira Sergeyevna had gone away. . . ."

"Nobody accuses you," Glafira Sergeyevna broke in hastily. "What nonsense, indeed. When was this?"

"Not so long ago that I've forgotten how you dared to behave to him."

Mitya turned to his wife in surprise. She did not answer, but merely pursed her lips and looked at me sullenly.

"If you'd been in Lopakhin at that time, Mitya," I went on, forgetting that until then I had been calling him Dmitri Dmitrich, "you would have been at least as angry as I was. Now, you see, you're interested in his writings, and you even think that you may have need of them for some work you are doing. But where were you when he was dying, alone, without friends or relations? And he never asked for anything! And did you ever know him to give his own self a moment's thought? He wrote to Vladimir Ilyich about his work. . . ."

I stopped talking in order to calm down, but Mitya repeated with astonishment, "Vladimir Ilyich?" and I darted off again at top speed, without considering where I was heading.

"Yes, yes! And that letter would have been finished and sent off if you had taken the trouble to look at those manuscripts which I, in your opinion, had no right to keep. But I came here to talk about something else. Glafira Sergeyevna has slandered me. I demand that she take this slander back immediately, in your presence, and acknowledge that she put her own guilt on to me."

Every word of which this passionate speech was composed seemed to me so irrefutable that I was already almost prepared to forgive Glafira Sergeyevna. . . . "She'll cry now!" I thought, triumphantly. But Glafira Sergeyevna didn't cry.

"You've finished?" she asked. "Now, Dmitri, I ought to have told you that I've no intention of talking to this. . ." (she couldn't find the word) "and I can only say that I'm amazed that you should have brought this. . . ." She deliberately referred to me every time just as "this." "Why did you do it? To insult me? Well, let me tell you that the facts are that she was living with a neighbour who'd taken her in out of charity, and she hoped to grab Pavel Petrovich's room with all his belongings. There's another matter to be cleared up, by the way. Tell me, Comrade . . . what's your name . . ." she said, turning to me with repugnance, "where are the actress Krechetova's letters which Pavel Petrovich left with you?"

Mitya asked uneasily, "What Krechetova are you talking about?" and I felt with horror that he and Glafira Sergeyevna were in one camp and I in a completely different one. Behind this thought another one flickered rapidly: "She has stolen those letters from me!"

"Where?" I countered, coolly. "In Lopakhin, in safe hands."

"Indeed? In safe hands?" And Glafira Sergeyevna picked up from the table the book which I had been thinking must have something to do with the Alexandrinsky Theatre. "Here they are!" She threw the book across to me. "Published! Now, I suppose, you'll have the cheek to say that you didn't sell them."

I was standing at a distance from her and the book fell on the floor. Mitya took a step forward but I got there first. *Letters of O. P. Krechetova to an Unknown*, I read on the white cover, unable to believe my eyes.

"I can't make head or tail of all this," Mitya muttered.

"You know, Krechetova, the actress. Well, all right. I'll tell you later. But what a dirty thing to do; to find out that among the old man's papers there were some private letters, to smell that they were worth something, and to find a publisher and sell them to him. And this. . ." (Glafira Sergeyevna restrained herself with difficulty from uttering a rude word) "you've brought here to see me!"

It was the first time in my life that I had encountered such a blank, barefaced lie, so striking in its neatness; no wonder that I got confused. I ought to have turned on my heel and left. But at that moment I saw in my mind's eye with almost painful clarity Rayevsky's fat face with his blinking eyes, and heard his voice saying, "I need those letters. Is it a deal? Advance paid today!" And just as though I had taken that money and promised to steal those letters, I began to babble something or other, addressing myself not to Glafira Sergeyevna but to Mitya. A cruel expression came over his face and flickered in his eyes, and this expression cut me to the heart like a knife.

"Do you believe *her*?" I cried.

He turned his back on me, and I fled from the room. I had lost control of myself and had one thought only, that I must not cry before that terrible woman, before those dishonest, glittering eyes fixed on me with such hostility.

## LETTERS TO AN UNKNOWN

I mentioned that it was the first time in my life that I had encountered a barefaced lie. So many things happened during the first three days after my return to Leningrad; it was as though someone had been getting them ready for a long time in a big basket, and now had turned this basket upside down over my head without warning, and that was a new experience, too. Amongst these events there were important ones, and also ones which were not particularly important, and to sort out the former from the latter I had to stop, look and think. But I couldn't! I saw only one object before my eyes; the book entitled *Letters of O. P. Krechetova to an Unknown*. At last I found a copy in a second-hand bookshop in Liteiny Avenue.

It must have been a most unusual sight—a girl walking with an open book in her hand through the streets of Leningrad, paying not the slightest attention to the shouts of drivers or the whistles of militiamen. Twice she nearly fell under a horse. She bumped into passers-by. A student of her own year hailed her at the corner of Semyonovskaya Street, but she did not recognize him.

The letters which the old doctor had asked her to burn after his death were now being read by strangers, by indifferent, unknown people, and anybody who had three rubles and fifteen kopeks to spare could do as she had done, find these letters in a shop and buy them. The letters she had not been able to bring herself to read when they were in manuscript had been printed in five thousand copies, with a preface by some hack who vulgarly threw out hints about the "life-riddle of a famous actress."

She read these letters, and it seemed to her that the whole town, eyes wide open, was going through the book page by page along with her. There she saw a beautiful woman with dark eyes walking along a path in a park, while a tall man in casual summer clothes and wide-brimmed panama hat was waiting anxiously for her in an arbour by the sea-shore. A sunburnt face with fine, rather prominent eyes, full of the torment and joy of expectation. Now he sees her and runs to meet her. . . . This was their first meeting at Balaklava, to which Krechetova tenderly referred in a number of letters. Then they met at Genichesk, at Azov, always at one or other of those little towns in the South, where nobody finds these joyous yet sorrowful meetings strange.

The girl crossed the city with the book open in her hands, and it seemed to her that as she passed from page to page the noisy streets of Leningrad became quieter. She walked through the Summer Garden down to the riverside. The rustle of the leaves of the venerable lime-trees was hardly audible, the people on the landing-stage, from which a puffing, overloaded steamboat was setting off for the island, fell silent and stopped laughing. And the silent city read, together with her, the sad story of two people who had always loved each other.

1. ". . . However difficult and almost unbearable our bitter meetings may be, yet when you go away I feel such an emptiness around me that I can't understand how I still

move, talk and act. You know, it's not only on the stage that I act."

2. "... Just think of the utter senselessness of a situation where two people, who can't imagine a single moment of happiness without each other, have to grieve, and torture themselves, and go on telling lies at every step. When I'm forced to pretend to hear your name with indifference, when I've just left you with my cheeks aflame, I begin to feel that one day this tormenting shame will kill me. Yes, it's impossible for us to see each other, and we must part. But it is enough merely to imagine the emptiness, the horror, that these words open up, for me to drive the idea away, passionately, hatefully. Yes, we are truly condemned together, you and I, my poor darling, to suffer this torture, this unexampled happiness...."

3. "... Charcot, in Paris, found that I was exhausted and ordered me to go to Sicily. You can imagine how little I wanted to go there when I knew that you would be waiting for me at Pless! I followed the Russian papers feverishly and rushed off at the first news of the opening of the Volga, after convincing the doctors that the air of Pless would do me more good than that of alien Sicily."

4. "... It's impossible to imagine what I've lived through in these two weeks and I'm not going to describe it. No, you must go! When you are in Moscow and I know that I can't see you, I grow resigned to the idea after a while, and the pain in my heart doesn't hurt so much. But when you're in Petersburg, not to see you, not to be with you, becomes an unbearable torment. These hurried meetings, when I have to keep looking at my watch every moment, this knowledge that we have to hide ourselves, like thieves, is destroying me."

5. "... Yesterday, when I was in Kazan Cathedral, I could not restrain my tears. And although I was standing in the midst of a crowd, in a dark corner, with my face covered with a veil, somebody felt it necessary to tell the newspapers about my tears and to try to guess the cause of

my sorrow. Oh God! Is an actress never allowed to belong to herself, in any way? Has the public the right even to her tears?"

6. "... Do you know how I felt when I left you last time? I felt that our love is a live thing, and that they were ordering us to smother and destroy this live thing. My God! To stifle what the over-full heart lives and moves by, to refuse the happiness without which I don't know whether it's worth while living. Oh how I would like things to be our way, my darling, my own, the way we've so often dreamt—if only for a little while. We'd go away, never mind where; to the country, or to the South. I'd look after you; I want so much to look after you. And every evening would be like that one at Balaklava when we walked back to the house and saw the fishermen with their rods, motionless on the sea. Do you remember Heine's *Book of Le Grand*? Read it and guess the place which I marked, thinking of you."

7. "... My darling, if you only knew how I miss you, how I suffer when you are away from me! I no longer even dream of ever being with you now. The years are passing, my hair is turning grey, and it's obvious that happiness won't wait for us. But just to see you, without having to hide, just to know that you are well and that you love me as before. I spoke to him again today. You know whom I mean. He said again that he would not give me a divorce, even if I were to take the whole blame on myself."

8. "... When I receive a letter from you I pick out first of all the words of love, just like a girl, and all the rest seems infinitely less important. I read your name a thousand times, and when you don't sign yourself 'ever yours' and just put your initials I begin to think that you don't love me as much as before. But I was worried by the news about 'a storm which is about to break' over your head. Why do you write so obscurely about this? Why? So as not to give me pain. But don't you realize, darling, that I shall never leave you? It's hard for me to write those words 'I shall never leave you' when we see each other only on your rare

visits to Petersburg. But it's true nevertheless; our love has long since become something which is, so to speak, outside our power, and not only outside but above us."

9. "... What are they saying in Moscow, about the failure of *The Sea-gull*? The Gostiny Dvor people, who are convinced that we act only for their pleasure, whistled, hissed, laughed, insulted the actors and eventually, brought about the failure of a wonderful play. Poor Chekhov! Never shall I forget him, looking so embarrassed, with his cheeks pinched up in a strained smile, as he listened to our words of comfort and reassurance. Without waiting for the play to end, he ran out of the theatre, throwing on his overcoat but forgetting his cap, so that he went out into the open with nothing on his head."

10. "... I'm writing in the hope that my letter will find you still in Petersburg. Sinelnikov has just told me that there are rumours in Moscow that the Minister has ordered that you be dismissed from teaching in the University. I know how important it is for you, especially after this clash with Dianov, still to be reckoned a University teacher. When will this nightmare be over which has already taken nearly all my friends away from me? Yesterday I learnt that Kravtsov had been sent to Arzamas under police supervision. I've never been a coward but I tremble at the mere thought that this madness might touch you. . . ."

11. "... Everybody is saying that they had been expecting it for a long time. And I agree with them, for I still have to keep up the pretence that there was nothing between us beyond mere acquaintance. I don't weep; I don't know how to express my grief. But I feel that I have gone blind, or fallen into a heavy sleep, in which I hear and feel but haven't the strength to cry out. My poor darling, my own, whom I love infinitely, for ever! Do you know what I've decided to do? I'll come to you to die."

* * *

Now I understood the sorrows which Pavel Petrovich never spoke about, which came from "over there," from that long-dead world where the lady with the dark eyes had lived. Now I understood them as vividly as though the old photographs which hung above the harmonium in their mother-of-pearl frames had come down from the wall and told me the story of their life. It was a sad life, and after reading a few of these letters it was hard to keep the tears back. I didn't let them flow, however, for they would have led me too far....

Krechetova wrote a great deal about the theatre and about the parts which she played. The names of Gorky and of the actresses Savina and Komissarzhevskaya gleamed from nearly every page. These were the letters of an actress. But what was strange was that it was not Krechetova but the "unknown" to whom her letters were addressed who stood forth vividly from these pages.

"One ought to write on a man's tombstone," this "unknown" had said to me one day, "not what he was but what he ought to have been." Here was what he ought to have been—famous, proud, self-confident, made happy by an extraordinary love....

There was, of course, no doubt as to who had published this book. The title-page gave the publisher's name as "The Times" and the address as No. 24 Fontanka Embankment. But how could Rayevsky have managed to lay hands on the letters, seeing that I had written to my father before I left for Anzersk Settlement and had received the answer from him that the old doctor's trunk was safe and sound and was in its place under his bed, just as before?

Perplexed, but ready to set all the forces of my mind and heart to work to solve this mystery, I flew back to the hostel, and came face to face with the hall porter.

"Ah, here you are at last!" he said. He was a bewhiskered, long-nosed old man who knew all our business, and could always be relied upon to help us round life's awkward corners. "You're long overdue."

"What's happened?"

"Your Dad's arrived."

"What did you say?"

"Dad, Father! Your Dad!"

## BAD NEWS

He was sitting on my bed looking very pleased with himself; his small nose was red. He wore a brown suit which was creased but presentable, and instead of a tie he had a black bow. His moustaches were twisted up and his fluffy hair, not much of which remained, was jauntily combed across his brow. When I entered he was telling my roommates something with a boastful, self-confident air. They were listening with smiles on their faces. When he saw me, Father rose, but staggered and sat down again on the bed.

"Ah, there's my daughter," he said. "Hullo, daughter! Out of the blue, eh? I'm on my way to the Amur, to Mikhailo Chesnokov Station, to see about a rare specimen of a bull of the Simmenthal breed."

The girls noticed my blushes, and left the room on some pretext or other. I was left alone with my father. He looked at me, blinked, and laughed gaily.

"How honoured I am to have such a daughter," he said with enthusiasm. "The Lord be praised! A wonderful, splendid daughter. Your friends were telling me about you. I'm proud of you!"

He turned his head aside, delicately covering his mouth with the palm of his hand.

"Excuse me," he said, and hiccupped. "It's from sorrow, Tanya, believe me, from my grievous loneliness. Avdotya is dead."

"Dead?"

"*Allée, marchée.* 17th July of this year." And he told me a long story about how for the last few years he had been working as a cloak-room attendant at a hairdresser's, taking people's overcoats and issuing tags for them, which was a fine job; without it culture would perish, for no self-respecting barber would shave or cut the hair of a customer who was wearing an overcoat. Then one day he went home and began to shout for Avdotya, but she remained sitting at the table, silent. He shook her by the arm, but she collapsed on the floor and that was the end of her.

"It was a hellish thing," he said, and sobbed. "What a cook she was! She worked seventeen years for the Marquise de Traversé. She gave up drink very suddenly, that was what did for her. It's not possible to be a drinker for such a long time and then suddenly to chuck it at a moment's notice. The organism went under. So there I was, lying at anchor, my dear," said Father, and slapped his knee complacently. "Now I'm off to the Amur. Petka Strogov has sent for me and I must go. He's reared a Simmenthal bull. Six thousand miles from Mother Russia he's reared this bull, for the sake of principle and not for gain."

I listened and said nothing. I had not forgotten what my father was like, but during the years we had not seen each other his features had become smoothed out in my memory. Now it made me sick to see that he had grown still more ridiculous and abject. He showed me the request which he had received for him to ask the Railwaymen's Union of the Amur Railway, in the name of some "Association of Responsible Labour," to "forward an exhibit to the holy city of reviving proletarian industry when, in the autumn of this year, the Agricultural Exhibition opens in Moscow." Petka Strogov, he explained, was working as a railway porter and could not personally take the bull to Moscow; but he, Pyotr Vlasenkov, could. The real point, however, was not the bull, but the fact that there was buried treasure not far from Mikhailo Chesnokov Station. He was going to find that treasure and go halves in it with me.

He was very drunk, and the first thing I had to do was to get him out of the hostel and fix him up with accommodation somewhere. But where? At Nina's? I didn't even know whether Nina was back in Leningrad yet. I would put him in a hotel if I could find a room there.

"Now, then, Dad," I said suddenly. "I've got to talk to you about something very important. It's a good thing you've come here, for otherwise I should have had to go and visit you this week. Do you remember Pavel Petrovich? You know, the old doctor? I often used to go to his house."

"Why, yes," father mumbled.

There was a sort of uncertainty in that short answer. Until then he had been looking straight at me with his bright eyes, which stuck out like two beads from his bewhiskered little face, but now he dropped his eyes, and an expression which I couldn't define appeared in them. Was it fear?

"Listen to me carefully. When the doctor died, the people at the Disabled Persons' Home gave me his trunk. There was nothing in the trunk except papers." I was trying to speak slowly, so that he should understand, and it seemed that I was succeeding. "You knew about it. When I left Lopakhin I handed this trunk over to you and asked you to look after it. Do you remember?"

"Why, yes," my father mumbled again.

"The trunk contained Pavel Petrovich's scientific work and, along with them, some letters from a certain actress. He kept them very carefully. He didn't want anybody to read them, because they were private letters."

My father was silent. His eyes wandered from side to side, looking helplessly stupid, and his fingers, which now and again he raised to his lips, trembled as they always did when he felt himself to be in the wrong. I went on, calmly:

"Now, those letters have been published. Here they are." My father looked at the book, terror-stricken. "How that could have happened I don't know. Evidently somebody must have taken them out of the trunk and copied them and sold the copies. Or perhaps it wasn't copies but the letters themselves that were sold, though that's frightful even to think of. I'm having plenty of trouble over this business, Dad."

"Why?" he mumbled.

"Because the Lvovs think that it was I who did this. And you know," I added forcibly, "what Pavel Petrovich was to me. And now. . . ."

"What's all the fuss about," my father whispered. "They're not lost, are they?"

"So far as I'm concerned it would be much better if they were!"

I must have been very tired, for my voice suddenly broke and it was with difficulty that I kept back my tears.

My father rose to his feet. I don't know what was going on in his mind, but for some reason he carefully drew his old wallet out of his trousers pocket, and took from it first one receipt, then another. He put the two receipts together, let his wallet fall and threw himself on his knees before me.

"Judas!" he cried, and beat his breast. "I'm to blame. Your father is a scoundrel. Toll the bell! I've betrayed my own daughter."

I made him sit on the bed and gave him some water to drink. My hands shook.

Everything became clear to me long before I heard the end of his muddled, long-winded story. Rayevsky (my father spoke of him with loathing as "that man") had come to Lopakhin in March of this year, and had first called on my father, "bringing refreshment." Whether he had difficulty in winning my father over I don't know. Father assured me that Rayevsky took a fortnight to talk him round.

"It was terrible!" he said, hanging his head. "Because in such matters I'm usually firm as flint."

But as he had to get to the Amur and his ticket would cost a lot—350 rubles and 40 kopeks—and Avdotya was ill and there was no money to bury her, and Rayevsky worked upon him "ruthlessly," Father eventually agreed, unlocked the trunk and took the papers out.

"All the papers?" I asked, almost calmly.

"All," Father replied. Losing all self-control, I flung myself upon him and shook him furiously by the shoulders. I don't remember what I shouted at him. Somebody knocked on the door, and as though in a dream I saw Lena Bystrova standing on the threshold.

"Tanya! Tanya, dear! What's the matter with you? Tanya!"

## HOW TO PROCEED?

But for Lena I should have been simply lost on that wretched day. I had to pay in advance for the room (we took Father to the Hotel Moscow), and I had just handed in my stipend to the treasurer of our commune. Lena found the money. She took me to her home, gave me something to eat and made me lie down. I could hardly stand, though I tried to go to the Institute to deal with various things which Lena assured me could quite well be put off till the following day.

"Well, there you are," she said, throwing a shawl round her shoulders and making herself cosy at my feet. "Now tell me about it."

"About what?"

"About everything. And don't dare to make anything up if you want me to have any respect for you. At the moment I know only one thing: your father's upset you. Right?"

I nodded.

"But there was nothing new for you in that."

I nodded again.

"Then I need to know what was new. What happened?"

"Lena, do you remember my telling you about the old doctor? It was long ago, in my first year. We were arguing. You were saying that one's profession is sometimes chosen by accident, and used me for an example. And I replied that medicine wasn't at all a casual matter for me, and that, when I decided to go in for it, none of your arguments had influenced me in the least. Do you remember?"

"Yes, I do."

"Well, then.... When Pavel Petrovich died, he left some papers. A whole trunkful of them. During his last days he had nobody near him except me to whom he could leave them. There were some private letters from a woman who loved him and a scientific work on which he'd been working all his life. And now...."

I told her how the old doctor's papers fell into Rayevsky's hands. Lena pondered.

"Was this work of his of scientific value?"

"Undoubtedly. I'm growing more and more convinced of it every year."

"Why hasn't it been published?"

"Because Pavel Petrovich had only written half of it, and said that the most important part was still to come."

"In that case we must do everything we can to rescue it from the hands of that fellow. And it won't be at all a complicated business, I'm sure! We have the Soviet power behind us and it doesn't allow valuable scientific works to fall at random into the clutches of any speculator. I'll have a word with Dmitriyev about it, shall I?"

I replied that I'd like her to, and Lena went away, explaining that she must hurry to visit her father at Sestroretsk, and assuring me as she left that everything would come right.

Vasily Alexeyevich was ill, and Maria Nikandrovna had taken him almost by force to a good sanatorium in Sestroretsk.

Yes, Lena was right; Rayevsky must be forced to return Pavel Petrovich's papers. But how was I to go about it? Should I approach the militia, or the procurator's office? And why had I ever left the trunk in Lopakhin anyway? True, when I left I didn't know what was awaiting me ahead, and I couldn't take it with me. But last year I had written to my father, and he had answered that the trunk with the papers was all right: that was when I ought to have put everything aside and gone to Lopakhin. But I couldn't do that in the midst of my work, half-way through the academic year!

Inconspicuously at first, there appeared amongst my restless, vague ideas a definite one which shyly knocked on my heart, and at once subordinated all the others to itself. Rayevsky had published the letters in book form because that was a profitable thing for him to do. But the manuscript? Would this unscrupulous profiteer realize that what he had before him was a scientific work to which an entire life had been devoted? What if he had simply thrown into the stove those muddled, illegible sheets of paper, covered with writing in an old man's trembling hand? Now this terrifying idea was knocking at my heart not shyly but boldly, with full force.

Lena's persuading me to stay in her room had served no purpose, for I couldn't sleep. It was hot and stuffy in the flat and there was a smell of drying wood, varnish and something else, and one could only walk from Lena's room to the dining-room and back. It had always been so noisy and merry at the Bystrovs, with Maria Nikandrovna scolding somebody for being unfair and suddenly emerging from the kitchen with some pies just baked according to a new recipe, Vasily Alexeyevich busy at his joiner's bench in the evenings, us studying and everything breathing comfort, calm and happiness. But now? My heart contracted and I felt such a weight on my heart that I was on the brink of tears.

"Ring up Mitya." That's what I had to do first and foremost, I thought as I lay on the divan and gazed at the workbench, on which some pieces of wood had been left lying. "But that meant that I had to tell him about Father! Yes, that's what I had to do, no matter how hard it would be."

"Speaking."

"It's Tanya Vlasenkova," I said, feeling ready to kill myself for the uncertainty in my voice. "Dmitri Dmitrich, you can think whatever you like about me. But this is what I want to tell you. Today my father came here from Lopakhin, and he told me.... After all, you do want to know the truth, don't you?"

"Yes," Mitya answered, after a short silence.

"Then I must see you."

He didn't answer me immediately. Another moment and I'd have hung up.

"All right. Where and when?"

"Wherever you like." I saw I had blundered. "You know I live at the hostel."

"In the Summer Garden, perhaps?"

"Excellent. At nine o'clock, by the Krylov Monument."

* * *

The newsboys were crying, "*Vechernaya Krasnaya Gazeta!*" in their different voices, the sun was setting, the warm summer day was cooling over the Neva, when I went to meet Mitya.

I bought a copy of the evening paper. The leading article was devoted to the Five-Year Plan, and I was surprised that though this article described a tremendous task which was to transform our whole life, it did not contain a single word about the young specialists, in particular about the doctors, who also had, it seemed to me, something to do with the Five-Year Plan.

Mitya was waiting for me. All the benches around the Krylov Monument were occupied and he was walking up and down some distance away. "Yes, he *is* handsome," I thought in spite of myself. He was well dressed, almost dandified, wearing a light-coloured suit and carrying a smart cap in one hand and a stick in the other. I forgot to mention that I, too, had taken my new dress from the dressmaker that day, and it looked very well—a long jacket, shaped to the waist, and a short skirt.

"I ought to have realized yesterday that it would be hard for you to remain objective when I got into an argument with Glafira Sergeyevna," this phrase, and only this one, I had prepared overnight. "But I couldn't find the explanation at once of how the letters came to be published. That gave me a shock."

"Yes, I saw you were confused."

I looked at Mitya out of the corner of my eye. He had spoken those words in a tone completely different from the previous day's; cordially and simply.

"I didn't think, I just decided to leave, that was all. It was a pity, though, that I didn't manage to say that you were no less to blame than Glafira Sergeyevna. Still, I didn't ask you to come here so that I could reproach you," I said hastily; not because Mitya was frowning but in order the more quickly to get to the point of our talk. "This is the point. Yesterday your wife accused me.... You know what she accused me of."

I got muddled and was obliged, after I had recovered my breath, to begin again at the beginning.

At last I told him everything: how some profiteer (I deliberately did not name Rayevsky) had come to Lopakhin some years before and offered to buy Pavel Petrovich's letters from him, and how the following day he had approached me about the matter, but I had sent him away and he left Lopakhin empty-handed.

"Pavel Petrovich asked me to burn those letters. I couldn't bring myself to do it and I deeply regret that, because if I had done it something else, something so terrible that I can scarcely speak about it, wouldn't have happened. Pavel Petrovich's scientific manuscripts wouldn't have been lost. For, you know, the work of his whole lifetime was in that trunk."

Now I had to go on to explain about Father. Oh, how unpleasant it was! I felt hampered, too, by the fact that we were in the Summer Garden, where there was an unusually large number of people strolling about that evening. Stout personages wearing new hats (probably Nepmen) were walking sedately along the main avenue, while their dressed-up wives conversed in loud voices. Marble tables stood in the dusty open space in front of the tea-house, and waiters, their white aprons flashing, were carrying ice-cream and lemonade to them. It was a sultry evening, and I wanted all the time to get out of this jostling, noisy crowd.

"What I've said so far I could have toid you yesterday. After I left you I found that my father had come. Now this is what.... A few words about my father."

The faster I wanted to talk about my father, the slower, somehow, did I succeed in speaking.

"He's ... a thoughtless man who's been through many different jobs during his life. He's off to the Amur now; he'd get a job out there, on the railway. I don't interfere in his affairs, because for a long time it's made no difference. Well, now, my father told me that this publisher returned to Lopakhin in March of this year and persuaded him to sell Krechetova's letters. And Father did it," I said in a hard voice. "Not only that, either. All Pavel Petrovich's papers went as well; his book and his letter to Lenin, everything, everything. Perhaps they aren't lost. But I don't know where they are, and I'm afraid they mayn't have been preserved, because that profiteer ... may have just thrown them in the fire. For, of course, he knows nothing about science."

I was silent. Mitya walked along beside me, hanging his head.

"What's this man's name?" he asked. "On the cover, I believe, it gave the name of the publishers as 'The Times.'"

I replied, "Rayevsky."

Mitya stopped.

"Which Rayevsky?"

"That one."

I knew that Mitya was very quick-tempered. Only the previous day he had flown in his wife's face before my very eyes, his own face pale with fury. But now.... One might have thought that by naming Rayevsky, I had pressed on a *locus minoris resistentia,* as the doctors call it, that is, the point of least resistance.

"Very well," he said through his teeth. "So Rayevsky published these letters?"

"Yes."

"And you think he also has Pavel Petrovich's other papers?"

"Yes."

"Is he in Leningrad?"

"I don't know. The book gives the publishers' address as No. 24, Fontanka Embankment."

Mitya looked at his watch.

"Pity it's so late," he said, viciously.

"Do you want to go and see him?"

"Yes, along with you."

"That's fine. Shouldn't you ask whether I agree to come?"

"Do you?"

"Yes. But first come and see my father, Dmitri Dmitrich. I want you to hear with your own ears how it happened."

## A TALK WITH RAYEVSKY

Waving aside Mitya's repeated assurances that he "believed me, of course, he believed me," I insisted, and took him along to see my father, who was sitting in his room, by the window, smoking and enjoying the view of Insurrection Square. The two rubles I had left with him for his lunch had evidently been spent on something different, because when we arrived he nodded haughtily, without getting up, and chatted with Mitya in a sort of free-and-easy, aristocratic manner. Describing how Rayevsky had persuaded him to fetch the letters out of the trunk, he said, "We dealt as one nobleman with another," though to the best of my knowledge the Vlasenkov family were never included in lists of the gentry of the Russian Empire. "When I saw he was wearing a starched collar I ordered my wife to give me one, too." Somehow he got everything mixed up, and told his story quite differently from the way I had told it to Mitya. Not only, to be brief, did he not call himself a Judas or ask that the bell be tolled, and so forth, but he bore himself as though he were the hero of some adventure from which he had emerged with honour, as was to be expected of a noble personage like himself.

But, what could I do with him?

Mitya, however.... From his first sight of Father he understood everything. He listened courteously, attentively, without showing the slightest irony. Sometimes I blushed and sometimes I went pale, especially when Father began to make things up. Mitya tried by glances to reassure me. When my father suddenly announced that before the revolution he was chief producer at the Alexandrinsky Theatre I interrupted him with impatience. Mitya cautiously and skilfully changed the subject.

At last this long-winded story came to an end. Mitya thanked Father and said that he would without fail look into the affair, asked a question about the Amur Railway, and took his leave. I went down with him to show him out. He was very quiet.... We descended into the hall. He bought a paper. I was on the point of saying good night to him when suddenly he crushed the paper in his hand, went pale, and abruptly turned to face me. This was so unexpected that the idea sprang unbidden into my mind that he had read some bad news in the paper.

"We'll go and call on Rayevsky tonight," he said. "Right now!"

"It's too late. The publishers' office will be closed."

"No, we must go now. They can give us his home address by telephone."

* * *

We were making a mistake, one which might be forgiven so far as I was concerned but not in Mitya's case, for he was older, more experienced and cleverer than I. I didn't know then that three-quarters of his life had consisted of mistakes of this kind.

Anyway, we found Rayevsky's home address without leaving the Hotel Moscow, and within ten minutes at most we were ringing and knocking at the door of his flat. I rang, while Mitya impatiently knocked.

"Who's there?"

Mitya did not hear and went on knocking.

"Dmitri Dmitrich, they are coming to the door."

"Who's there?" repeated a woman's frightened voice, which came to us from a distance.

"Is this Rayevsky's flat?"

A long silence.

"Whom do you want?"

"Rayevsky, of course! Let us in, please."

Silence again.

"And who are you?"

"Dr. Lvov," Mitya replied, politely but ominously. "With an assistant."

We heard a clatter of hooks and a clashing and then the melodious sound of a lock being turned, just as when an old chest is being opened. I remembered hearing rumours that some of the very rich Nepmen in Leningrad, especially jewellers, out of fear of burglars, had installed alarm systems in their flats and also had them fitted with steel doors. I don't know whether or not this door was made of steel, but it was very heavy, and now it slowly opened to admit us. A stout, elderly woman, in spectacles and blinking the way Rayevsky did, met us in the hallway.

"Dr. Lvov," she repeated, distrustfully. "To see Sergei Vladimirovich?"

"Yes, that's right."

The old woman went away. Setting his stick on the ground between his legs with a bang, Mitya sat down and proceeded to examine the hall with an angry expression. It was an ordinary hall.

The old woman came back.

"Sergei Vladimirovich asked me to say that he didn't send for a doctor."

"What?"

Mitya took a step towards her. The old woman retreated. He took another step. She squealed. At the end of the corridor Rayevsky appeared, pushing aside a door-curtain through which I glimpsed a large, brightly-lit room. I was startled; he had aged so much that I found it hard to recognize him. His cheeks sagged and there were bags under his eyes. His legs set wide apart, his shoulders stooped and his head lifted, looking in his green dressing-gown somewhat like a toad, he stood in the doorway and stared at us with anxiously blinking eyes. I don't think he recognized me, but Mitya, of course, he knew the moment he saw him.

"Well, well, so this is who Dr. Lvov is," he said, with a grimace of open disgust. "Come in."

I don't know what the room was supposed to be, whether it was a study, a drawing-room, or both. Never in any commission shop, however, had I seen so many expensive things. There were wood-carvings in heavy frames, carpets, marble statues. A huge chandelier of crystal hung above a round table. Another smaller table was covered with a magnificent cloth embroidered with a design showing a naval battle. All round the room there were sets of crockery, in antique redwood cabinets, on the window-sills, and even on the floor under the piano. The cheval-glass was decorated with flowers in mother-of-pearl.

"Well, what can I do for you?" asked Rayevsky.

Mitya drew up a chair and sat down.

"Today," he said menacingly, "a book called *Letters of O. P. Krechetova to an Unknown* came into my hands. Here it is. Did you publish it?"

He used the familiar form of "you," and uttered the word with such emphasis that the chandelier jingled faintly in response.

"Please don't shout if you can avoid it."

"I asked you, did you publish it?" Mitya repeated, in a deafening voice.

"Well, yes, I did. What's the matter?"

"The fact is that these letters belonged to my uncle, Pavel Petrovich Lebedev, and after his death they became the property of my family. You had no right to publish them."

Rayevsky shrugged.

"You should see the publishers' lawyer about that; he is at No. 24 Fontanka."

Mitya was silent.

"Listen, Rayevsky," he began again, in a fairly calm voice, though a nerve began to quiver dangerously in his cheek. "Let's speak plainly. I know perfectly well that you stole those letters. Not by yourself," he exclaimed, as he saw that Rayevsky was shaking his head vigorously. "With the help of this girl's father, who is now in Leningrad."

"The papers were acquired for an agreed sum. The publishers have the receipt, drawn up in proper form."

Mitya breathed noisily.

"Very well," he went on, mastering himself. "After all, what matters is not these letters. At the same time as you obtained them, however, you became the possessor of some scientific writings of Dr. Lebedev's. They are of no interest to you. This work, which is important for science, is written in rough note-books and is incomprehensible except to a specialist. It is about microbiology, whereas you, so far as I'm aware, are a publisher of trashy novels in translation."

I gazed at Rayevsky, holding my breath. The most important point was being settled at that moment. Had he kept Pavel Petrovich's book or had he destroyed it? A shadow of calculation passed over his cold, plump face.

"And the specialist who would understand these notes is—yourself?"

I breathed again. He had kept them!

"Yes. Listen, God damn you," said Mitya, almost cheerfully. "I'm prepared to forgive you this book," and he held up *Krechetova's Letters*, "on condition that you return the original letters and publish an apology in the press. But you must hand over Dr. Lebedev's notes to me now, do you hear? This very moment!"

Rayevsky listened, his head thrown back and smiling contemptuously. When we arrived he had looked frightened, had recoiled and even clutched at the curtain. But now there was no sign at all that he was ready to retreat.

It was at this moment that I recalled two Lopakhin *gymnasium* pupils. Now they had met again, having grown so different from each other that it was hard to realize that they had been born in the same period, lived in one town and worn the same uniforms, with the letters L.G. on a cupro-nickel plaque.

The Rayevsky who had deeply and fatally outraged his first love, that was the person whom Mitya saw in front of him. And I sensed that Rayevsky understood that quite clearly. He smiled with such low triumph, with such malicious enjoyment, so openly, that I began to feel embarrassed, as though I were eavesdropping.

Mitya fell silent. The nerve still throbbed and his lips once or twice trembled suspiciously. But he still kept control of himself. He said something about my father holding himself ready to "give evidence."

"You mean, to go to court about it?" asked Rayevsky. "As you please! The publishers have suffered a loss on this book."

"Listen..." Mitya almost groaned through his teeth.

Rayevsky got up and wrapped himself tighter in his dressing-gown. His face had become less tense and his brow had cleared.

"Now, please get a move on," he said rudely. "You mustn't imagine that I've no other business to attend to than that matter of State importance which you've brought to me. Next time please ring up, and I'll endeavour to explain to you what experienced blackmailers do in such cases. Ugh, you blackmailer-activists!" he said, sneeringly, and laughed. "Komsomols, builders of the cultural bridge, Red specialists!"

Mitya rose, put his hands behind his back and walked across the room with measured tread. His expression was thoughtful and his eyes were half-shut. Carefully avoiding the furniture, he went up to Rayevsky and struck him with his stick.

He told me later that he had been afraid from the first that that would happen. He had tried not to think about his stick, not even to look in its direction. Even as he brandished it he hoped that perhaps the blow would not be struck. A vain hope! It was lucky that the stick slipped and the blow fell on Rayevsky's neck.

I screamed "Mitya!" and rushed towards him to seize his arm. Then I saw that for some reason Rayevsky was crawling on all fours on the floor, cowering and grabbing at the legs of the arm-chair, while Mitya, biting his lips, had raised his stick above his head and was aiming it at the cheval-glass decorated with mother-of-pearl flowers. He first knocked a hole in this cheval-glass, then with a series of small blows, like the ones you read about in accounts of fencing, he knocked it out of its frame. The old woman whom we had already met came rushing into the room with a shriek, followed by a slender, dark woman, wearing a kimono, who sprang silently at Mitya like a cat, so that he had to pinion her arms carefully and sit her down on the divan.

"Let's go, Tanya," he said curtly.

And we left, not hurrying over-much, although the woman in the kimono, screeching shrilly, was hurling plates after us, the old one was on the telephone, summoning the militia, and altogether there was good reason to hurry.

"What have you done, Dmitri Dmitrich? He won't hand them over for anything now, it's useless to think of it! You forgot to pick up your cap."

"To hell with it."

"Everything's ruined now."

We had a long talk over the telephone the following day, and he asked me when my father was leaving. But he asked this question quite incidentally, so that the last thing I expected was to see him at the railway station.

We had agreed that he was to draw up a petition to the District Procurator, and he had brought this petition with him. In it he set forth the circumstances in which the old doctor's papers had been lost, my father being depicted as a victimized, deceived party. Father didn't fully realize Mitya's kindness, for, putting on his glasses and looking around him complacently, he signed the petition without reading it. He was quite presentable that day, washed and brushed, a little sad, almost sober. When he was sober, a "light cloud of sadness" always descended upon him, as somebody once wrote. As he said good-bye he threw out a hint that possibly he wouldn't confine his activities to "escorting the bull" to the Agricultural Exhibition, for there were affairs awaiting him on the Amur that would "surprise many." Who these "many" were remained unclear.

"I personally disarmed the gendarmes," he said meaningly. "They know me on the Amur."

He kissed me three times, on alternate cheeks, whispered to me that I could consider half the treasure as already in my pocket, waved his handkerchief to us and was gone. Mitya followed the train with his eyes as it curved smoothly round the bend and said thoughtfully:

"A very interesting man, your Dad. . . ."

He asked me to show him something of Leningrad, and we went straight from the station to the Summer Garden.

"I did ask a friend of mine, a Leningrader, to show me round. He agreed; but then it turned out, when it came to the point, that he knew only two of the sights of the city: the gambling den on Vladimirsky Avenue and the Café Thirteen in Sadovaya Street."

I was sure that Mitya's request was only a pretext, and that really he wanted to tell me some important news. But now we had entered the Summer Garden and were going round it by the side paths, and had discovered that the Summer Palace of Peter the Great was that very modest two-storey house not far from where we had met three days before, yet Mitya had still not told me any news.

We talked about the Institute of Prophylaxis which was to be opened in Leningrad that year under Nikolai Vasilyevich's directorship; about Nikolai Vasilyevich himself (of whom Mitya remarked rather neatly that he was a scientist whose clarity of intellect was in direct proportion to his untidiness at work); about the bold scheme put forward by Professor Alexandrov, who was proposing to put locks on the Dnieper rapids; and about students' practical work which, under a new order by the People's Commissariat of Public Health, had now to be carried on all the year round and not only in the summer. Mitya explained unemployment (in those days there were many doctors unemployed) by two factors; first, the administration engaged non-members of the Medical Workers' Union, and second, many medical graduates would not take practices in the country.

"Young doctors are working for three years as externes or unpaid probationers," he said with indignation, "while in the country illiterate old women are treating patients with spells and spring water!" (I had told him about the old quack.) "No, to the devil with them. I don't believe these lily-handed fellows will ever make doctors. Take yourself! Since your third year you've been sitting in a lab. Isn't that a mistake? Now, I suppose, you'll spend your whole life proving that peptone should be obtained not from pigs' stomachs but from those of calves."

This was a little offensive, because Petya Rubakin was actually studying peptone and I was helping him. But I only said:

"I wouldn't dream of it."

"We'll see."

We went into the Summer Palace.

In a glass case in one of the rooms there hung a long, decrepit, moth-eaten uniform. I remarked that it was strange to think that a man had lived on the earth who had worn this uniform and had even stained it with tobacco. But Mitya replied that it wasn't strange at all, for Peter had only been a head taller than he was.

"Poor dear," he said gravely. "You're a little thing, Tanya, and you've no idea what a nuisance it is. . . ."

"What is?"

"Why, being so tall. Children tease you. 'Uncle, catch us a sparrow,' they shout, and so forth. In the morning it's nothing much, but by the evening it gets tedious."

I laughed. He looked at me affectionately and opened his eyes wide like a child.

The conversation which I had been waiting for so impatiently began with this uniform; or rather, not exactly that conversation, but a very interesting and important one nevertheless, because Mitya talked about himself for the first time. True, he boasted a little and at the same time pitied himself, giving to all his actions, as though unintentionally, a nuance of self-sacrifice and nobility. But even so this talk caused me to see him in a new light.

Very simply, he told me how his youth had begun, from the moment when he learnt the news of his father's death. That happened at the *gymnasium*, during a Latin lesson. He had remembered all his life the silence in class as, having picked up his books, he walked between the desks towards the door, his classmates staring at him with pity and curiosity—at the boy whose father had died. As yet he didn't know that his father had been murdered. In the unusually empty cloakroom the porter hurriedly gave him his greatcoat—hurriedly, because his father had died. A warm rain was falling in large, sparse drops among which the dust sparkled like diamonds. And this dust, and the freshness of the rain, and the fact that summer would soon be upon him, with the examinations, and he had only got a two for geometry last term—did all that mean that everything stayed just as it had been in the world, in spite of his father's death? Groaning wretchedly, and clutching his head, Mitya had rushed home. Crowds of people were already gathered there, talking excitedly. All the doors were open and a stout, smart policeman, standing up in a droshky, was shouting, "Will you student gentlemen please disperse!"

And so Mitya was left alone, in the very years when he stood especially in need of a guiding, friendly will. His mother not only had no influence at all over him, but she did nothing without his help and advice.

The old doctor, worn out by illness after his exile, had settled down in Lopakhin, in the town where he was born and grew up, and after her husband's death Agnia Petrovna sent the children to him and herself went to Petersburg, returning as an employee of the Zimmermann music firm.

Thus began his life at Lopakhin, which was, as Mitya expressed it, "a tale of the slow decline of a family of the intelligentsia." Agnia Petrovna had for a long time tried to conceal this decline and impoverishment from Mitya.

Decline and impoverishment! "But, to the girl from the tenements," I thought, "it seemed that there wasn't a richer or more wonderful house in the world."

We passed through Peter's bedrooms, nursery and study, and stopped before a huge wooden clock which took up an entire wall. Mitya said that this clock ought to be able to tell one not only the century, the month and the day but even tomorrow's weather, if only it hadn't stopped.

I suddenly felt an impulse to ask if it was true that he had gone to the front as a volunteer. Andrei had told me something about this when we were still living in Lopakhin. But I was shy and instead asked, also *à propos* of nothing, really, how and when Mitya had begun scientific work. When he was in Lopakhin he was an ordinary general practitioner; he had examined and treated Mother, he had prescribed for everybody in the house, and when the famine victims came he had also worked for them as a doctor.

"That was because I like treating people," Mitya answered. "As a matter of fact, though.... What year was it that I came back to Lopakhin? 1922? I had already published something at that time. Only a little thing, true: I described one curious case."

And he told me how in 1920, during the campaign in Poland, he had come across a problem which the most experienced doctors couldn't solve. A battle was being fought on the right bank of a river and the wounded, when dispatched to the left bank, invariably caught typhus. The instant they landed on the left bank they were subjected to the most thorough-going sanitary measures, and yet they went down with typhus. Why? Mitya had drawn up a chart of the incubation, or concealed, period of the disease, which showed that the time when infection occurred always coincided with the actual crossing of the river. All that remained was to examine the barge which carried the wounded across. It turned out to be the source of the disease.

In the beginning he had a little laboratory consisting of a microscope, a drying cupboard and two dozen test-tubes, but later he managed to organize a kind of bacteriological station at Army Headquarters.

We had traversed all the rooms in Peter's house and were now on the ground floor, in the kitchen, which was decorated with delightful Dutch tiles, and had been preserved with all its fire-dogs, supports for torches, coal-tongs and brass utensils, unusually large, and green with age. Mitya examined the tiles and was enraptured with them. His resemblance to Andrei was plain for a moment, as, with preoccupied face, he set to working out how often and in what sequence some nautical scenes were depicted on these tiles. "I must tell him now that I'm going to marry Andrei," I thought, my heart failing me. But Mitya suddenly glanced at his watch and hurried on, and I didn't say it.

As I said good-bye I asked whether he had been to the District Procurator's office, and Mitya replied that he hadn't, as he had decided to obtain the advice of a lawyer first.

"What do you need advice about? You want to recover Pavel Petrovich's manuscripts from Rayevsky, that's all."

"No doubt. But to do that I must first show that they don't belong to Rayevsky and that he came by them illegally."

"When are you going to see the lawyer?"

"Tomorrow."

"You must go today."

Mitya smiled.

"So that's what you're like, eh? Well, all right. Today."

## A COMPLICATED MATTER

When I returned home after this walk our bewhiskered porter handed me a letter from Andrei. He wrote that he had recovered and was back at work. "My dearest, my darling, how much I want to see you, and soon!" I read, and my heart began to beat in a shyly demanding way.

I had a lot of matters to attend to at that time. Vasily Alexeyevich was gravely ill. Lena and I fetched doctors to him, but the diagnoses they made were contradictory. One surgeon, as he was going away, said something very alarming, which we concealed from Maria Nikandrovna. There was also a great deal of work to be done in the department, Nikolai Vasilyevich having ordered me to repeat my experiment with the streptococci, so that not one minute remained free for personal affairs, let alone affairs of the heart. A vague uneasiness nevertheless began to trouble me from time to time. By day, when I was busy, it knocked cautiously, but at night it attacked me more and more strongly and boldly.

Tired out, I was sitting one day at a meeting of the subjects commission of the theoretical departments, which was considering an interesting new feature of our social life, the Students' Science Society, S.S.S. After endlessly revising every phrase I wrote an article about the S.S.S. for our newspaper, but the editorial board found it dull. The experiment with the streptococci hadn't worked out: possibly because I was impatient, or possibly because Nikolai Vasilyevich had let me carry out the experiment with the sole object of proving that I had been mistaken. He had no notion how much more, at that time, I needed his faith in my ability to do scientific work than his belief in the sacred exactitude of science.

I had told Mitya, when we were in Peter's house, that I had kept my notes of Pavel Petrovich's lectures, and he had asked me to look and see whether there was anything in these notes about Ivanovsky, the founder of virusology.

"Andrei said that Uncle even knew him slightly. Incidentally, there's hardly anything about Ivanovsky in scientific publications."

Since the time when my notes of Pavel Petrovich's lectures had given me the idea of adding extracts of liver and spleen to the medium through which I was passing the diphtheria bacillus, I had often looked through these notes. But it had never occurred to me to go through them from the virus angle. Now I did this. There was hardly anything about Ivanovsky, but on the other hand there were some interesting ideas about viruses.

Pavel Petrovich had seen the importance of viruses (invisible microbes) for biology in the fact that they constitute a sort of demarcation line between the quick and the dead. "Viruses are a special form of existence of protein which brings us to the frontier between the living and the nonliving." That was his first idea. The second concerned the "principle of antagonism," to which the old doctor ascribed particular importance, apparently. Sickness itself he regarded as a struggle between healthy cells and viruses or microbes.

"If we consider what an infinitely long time this struggle has been going on," he declared, "it will become clear that only those organisms have died which were the least resistant to viruses and microbes. It follows that the ability of the organism to combat its foes has been consolidated by heredity."

Pavel Petrovich had spoken in what, even judging only by my muddled notes, was a very interesting way about the people's experience of struggle against disease, and in particular of inoculation against smallpox. "Not Jenner but the people created these perfect inoculations, the like of which nobody, even with all the resources of present-day medicine, has been able to repeat."

* * *

Mitya neither called nor phoned during all this time. On the eve of the Congress, however, he suddenly turned up in the department. To my chagrin, he came in when I was busy helping Petya Rubakin with his work on peptone from calves' stomachs. But Mitya didn't say anything about that.

"Nikolai Vasilyevich invited me to have a look round the department," he said, "but he hasn't come himself. Did he ring you?"

"No."

Mitya sighed. He looked disappointed.

"Perhaps you could spare me a little time?"

I found I had all the time in the world to spare and willingly accompanied Mitya through all the laboratories, without understanding what Nikolai Vasilyevich had in mind when he invited him to look around. Then we walked out into the street, and without realizing that I had gone so far, I went along with him to Lopukhinka Street and through the garden which lies between Krasnye Zory Street and the bank of the Nevka.

Why did I feel that just on that day, on that cool, clear evening, so unlike the evening when we met in the Summer Garden, a new and friendly relationship arose between us? I cannot say. Mitya looked with interest at everything: at the fishermen who, wearing tarpaulin trousers and wet up to the waist, were dragging their nets along the bank of the Nevka, and at the eight-oar boat swiftly gliding over the water as its oars struck the water in concert.

First, we talked about the Congress. Was it true that his paper had been intended for the first session and then had been shifted to the last one by decision of the organizing committee?

"Yes."

"Why did they do that?"

"The devil only knows what they're up to," Mitya replied gloomily. "I suppose the old boys found out that I was going to speak against them."

It would have been a little impolite to ask who the old boys in question were, so, saying nothing more about this, I turned the conversation to Pavel Petrovich's lectures. Mitya brightened up.

"Have you found something?"

"Yes."

And I recounted Pavel Petrovich's idea, perhaps not very intelligibly. Mitya understood it, however, and, apparently, better than I did.

"God, what a brain he had!" he said with enthusiasm. "It's not new about the antagonism, but what is wonderful is how he understood this principle dialectically, in any case in the light of the theory of evolution. How did you put it? 'Viruses are a special form of protein which brings us to the frontier between the living and the non-living.' And that idea was produced by an ordinary doctor, working without a lab in Lopakhin, at that time! By the way, I've been to see the lawyer," said Mitya, becoming gloomy and poking viciously with his stick at a rotten stump full of last year's leaves.

"Oh, yes; and what happened?"

"He says it's a complicated business."

"Complicated?"

"He asked me which of Uncle's relations was dependent on him. I said, 'Nobody. On the contrary, he was dependent on his sister.' 'Well then,' says he, 'his property is frozen and by law must belong to the State.' I objected that this wasn't property but a scientific work which was in danger in the hands of a speculator. He replied, 'All the more so, then!' "

"What can be done?"

"He said that I should write to the Procurator."

"Dmitri Dmitrich, don't write, go and see the Procurator yourself. And don't go to the District one, go to the very highest. I don't know what he's called, the City Procurator or the Regional Procurator. I told Nikolai Vasilyevich."

"And what did he say?"

"He said that he could not understand how it was that you, a scientist, had done nothing before now to rescue a scientific work from the clutches of a rogue. Those were his words."

Mitya sighed. "Yes, he's right. And I must go not to the District but to the City Procurator. And before I go, Nikolai Vasilyevich must ring him up, then the business will be more certain."

We had long since left the park, but somehow we had turned not towards the Islands but towards the city, though Mitya had said that he wanted to see the Islands. It was late and beginning to get dark. A cabbie hailed us as we crossed Lev Tolstoi Square. Mitya replied, "Not needed," but the cabbie followed us quite a long way trying to persuade us to hire him. At Konverksky Avenue the roadway was wet (rain must have fallen there not long before) and a smell of freshness came from the park, while the newly-lit lamps gleamed on the memorial to the sailors of the *Steregushchy* and on the foliage. We went down to the Neva and Mitya said with admiration, "What a city!... Sometimes I start to feel myself a better person than I think I am, and then sometimes I'm convinced that I'm not, I'm worse. You know, the most difficult thing, damn it, is not to think everything that one does is perfect. That's the first thing.

And the second. . . . But you're too young to understand the second thing."

"No, tell me."

"It's not to hide from one's mistakes."

"Mistakes in science?"

Mitya walked a long time without answering. Then he said, with difficulty:

"Not only in science. You know, I wanted long ago to find out the truth from you, Tanya. Andrei knew about this, I think. You know what I'm talking about?"

He was asking whether Andrei knew that Glafira Sergeyevna had slandered me.

I replied that he did.

Mitya hung his head.

"But he didn't tell you. . . . The thing was that I didn't want. . . . He was always somehow impatient in these matters. I didn't want him to quarrel with Glafira Sergeyevna."

I looked at him. It was amazing, but before my eyes the old Mitya—self-confident, lively, brilliant—had disappeared somewhere, and his place had been taken by a tired, irresolute man who, it seemed, was anxious only about one thing, that his wife, a base and worthless woman, should be forgiven for a base and worthless action.

"I don't know, Dmitri Dmitrich," I said, gently (as I'd promised Andrei). "I think you ought to talk about this to your brother, personally."

He laughed uncomfortably.

"Quite true. And now I've a suggestion to make, Tanya. Let's have something to eat."

I had long felt hungry, so hungry that I felt dizzy and sometimes found it hard to listen to Mitya with attention. But I hadn't been home after leaving the lab, and was wearing a plain dark-blue sateen dress and carrying my tattered old brief-case. So I asked, hesitantly:

"Where shall we go?"

"What's it matter?" Mitya answered, and we took a tram to the Kazan Cathedral and went into the "Donon."

I don't like restaurants, and there is reason to believe that this feeling, which surprises my friends and acquaintances, was born that evening when Mitya took me to dine at the "Donon."

A gorgeous man in a long uniform coat opened the sparkling glass door for us. Another man, also splendid, took my brief-case from me with fastidious disdain, and, hiding it somewhere, said, "No ticket necessary." A third man, wearing a black tailcoat, met us on the carpet-covered stairs and led us towards some more doors which opened by themselves as we drew near them. It turned out that they had been opened by some small boys who also wore little uniforms, each with two rows of silver buttons, placed very close together.

Mitya must have noticed that I was shy, otherwise why should he have offered me his arm? I took it, and we walked magnificently between tables at which well-dressed men and women were sitting and looking at us, it seemed to me, with scornful indifference. But I no longer cared about the reception we were being given, especially as I had Mitya's arm to lean on. I sat down, smoothed my dress and looked about me with scornful indifference, too. There were several rooms in the restaurant, and I was a little sorry that we didn't take a table in the next one, where the walls were covered with mirrors. A bald-headed waiter with a hard, wrinkled face gave us the menu. I ordered, and this was just as well, apparently, because Mitya didn't seem to know which of us should order, or else didn't attach any importance to the point.

It was then that things began to go wrong. First of all I found that I didn't feel like eating, so that when the waiter brought the *hors d'oeuvres* it was with difficulty that I forced myself to swallow a little salad. The soup passed more easily, but when reaching out my hand for the salt I knocked over one of the numerous wine-glasses which stood beside my cutlery, and the damned glass, with its tall, thin stem, got broken. Mitya laughed and said, "Good luck!" I laughed, too, but blushed as well, and the free, confident manner with which I had been chatting and casually glancing around me disappeared in a trice.

In short, I was so much shaken by my own behaviour that I didn't immediately notice the strange alteration which occurred in my companion. A moment before, Mitya had been talking brightly about the Congress, which 1,500 people were attending, it appeared. And then suddenly he stopped speaking. His brows went up in a nervous twitch and he pressed his lips together. He paled, and it seemed as if he became ill all of a sudden. I turned round. Glafira Sergeyevna was coming out of the next room, on Rayevsky's arm.

How I despised that woman; but I had to acknowledge that that evening she was looking extraordinarily beautiful! Her hair, combed smoothly from a centre parting, revealed a fine forehead, straight and clear. Her widely-spaced dark eyes shone in her full, slightly flushed face. She was wearing a dress of black velvet, fashionably long (it reached nearly to the ground), and at the open neck an agate necklace was visible, as though worn deliberately to emphasize the whiteness of her straight, beautiful throat. Rayevsky, whose face wore a satisfied, contented expression, was conducting her with a boastful and self-confident air.

Mitya followed them grimly with his eyes as they passed quite near but apparently without noticing us, and silence ensued. I asked him something, but he made no reply. At last he raised his head and I saw the almost physical effort with which he returned to me and to our conversation.

"Now then, what were we talking about?" he asked, in a somewhat artificial voice. "Ah, yes, about the Congress. Well, this is how it will begin. The People's Commissar will be late, and Nikolai Vasilyevich, putting on his official manner (sometimes he brings this off successfully), will declare that it is especially pleasing to see this Congress meeting in Leningrad. About the fact that it would please him still more to see it meeting in Chebotarka he doesn't, of course, say a word." And Mitya added in Nikolai Vasilyevich's voice, "And so we can say that we have lit a little flame of science in our microbiological hut, and this little flame will be a lamp that will attract our comrades in science throughout the Soviet Union."

He ordered wine and poured some out both for me and for himself.

"To our own Lopakhin!... Isn't it strange, Tanya, to think that once I nearly killed you," he added cheerfully. "God, how I remember every detail! You were wearing a shabby velveteen jacket that had once been green, and a shawl tied crosswise over your shoulders, and one of your boots fell off into the snow when I lifted you up in my arms. Did you know that it was while I was at your bedside that I decided to become a doctor?"

"Really?"

"I had intended to be a judge, and then, when they killed Father, I wanted to be a barrister. But when I saw you dying I resolved to become a doctor. More than that, my dear, I vowed that if you died I'd kill myself! But you, as Heinrich Heine puts it, 'passed by and left me among the living.' What was there left for me to do, doctor," Mitya asked, in a serious voice, "but to devote myself to medicine? I was shaken by your mysterious recovery and so...."

He drank some wine and rose to his feet.

"Well, let's go, Tanya," he said.

## AT THE CONGRESS

There was a crush at the entrance to the Philharmonic Society and as I forced my way into the vestibule I realized at once that I had no hope of getting into the Congress without a ticket. Masha Kolomeitseva came to my rescue. I ran into her in the vestibule and she asked me why I was looking so depressed. She took me under her wing and said to the ticket-collector, a cross-looking woman with a moustache:

"We don't need tickets. We're helping."

The ticket-collector nodded angrily, we went in, and when, doubling up with laughter, I asked, "What did you mean, 'helping'?" Masha waved her hand nonchalantly and said:

"Oh, what does it matter."

The Congress began exactly ten minutes after we had taken somebody else's seats, on which lay cards bearing the mysterious letters "M.O.B.", which Masha guessed to stand for "member of the organizing bureau." The Congress presidium consisted mainly of oldish men. Particularly noticeable amongst them was the figure of Korovin, who, so Petya Rubakin told me in the interval, had been the Director of Medical Services of the White Army—no more, no less! He also pointed out to me Nikolai Lvovich Nikolsky, the famous scientist, one of the founders of Russian microbiology.

"That's Grandad," said Rubakin as he pointed Nikolsky out to me. Grandad sat wrinkiing up his big, fleshy nose, his long legs crossed.

Just the same as usual, Nikolai Vasilyevich appeared at the presidium table—stooping a little, his hair going grey, with a bald patch, looking sweet in a shabby jacket and a unfashionable tie which, also as usual, was askew. He announced that the People's Commissar "had been delayed" (so Mitya's prophecy came true), and that therefore, "while awaiting his arrival," they would begin their work. Masha whispered:

"While awaiting, or without awaiting?"

I nudged her to be quiet and set myself to listen.

Nikolai Vasilyevich delivered a speech completely different from the one which I had heard Mitya recite the previous evening at the Donon Restaurant. He enumerated the extensive tasks facing the Soviet public health service in connection with the Five-Year Plan, and gave a broad outline of the situation in our practical and scientific medicine.

Then Nikolai Vasilyevich proposed that they honour by rising to their feet the memory of "outstanding workers who had been the life of previous Congresses," and after that the papers began. Masha wouldn't let me listen. Now she was carrying on a conversation on her fingers, like a deaf-mute, with somebody up in the gallery. Next she was laughing at a student we knew who was zealously taking down Zaozersky's address, which was to be published in the following day's paper. Then she was flirting simultaneously with three young men sitting behind us.

"Technique, eh?" she said, laughing, and started to teach me this technique, but got fed up after five minutes, declaring that I did not have a "serious, responsible attitude to the job," and thought of a new game. She began to write anonymous notes to students she knew. They were silly, but quite funny.

"Who's that?" she asked, when Mitya, whom I hadn't seen until then, appeared on the dais—not at the presidium table but in the background, on the steps to the right of it.

"Dr. Lvov," I replied.

"Do you know him?"

"A little."

"What a handsome man!"

"You really think so?"

"He's stunningly handsome!" said Masha. "Let's write to him."

"You're crazy."

"Well, then, you write, my sweet, my dear! Just a couple of words. I want him to know that you're here, then later on you'll introduce me to him."

"I wouldn't think of doing such a thing."

"What, you won't introduce me?"

"Why, yes, perhaps I'll introduce you, but why should I write to him?"

"He may suddenly be gone! Oh, please do! What difference does it make to you?"

And Masha put a pencil and paper into my hands almost by force.

"What shall I write?"

"It doesn't matter. Just a couple of words."

Sometimes, especially when I was in Lopakhin, I had found myself feeling gay without any reason. At such moments I was firmly and unconditionally confident that the very best and finest things in life were waiting for me round the corner. It was that very feeling which laid hold of me the instant I took up the pencil to write a note to Mitya. Something joyful resounded in my head, reflecting the radiance of the crystal chandeliers, the severe beauty of the white columns, the whole attractive holiday appearance of the magnificent hall. Instead of a couple of words, heaven knows what I wrote to Mitya! Some long, confused, enthusiastic rubbish. There were even verses in it; not my own, of course, but by Nikolai Tikhonov, whom I was very keen on at that time.

Screwing up one eye with curiosity, Masha leaned over to look at what I was writing, said "Oho!" and, after folding the note, wrote on the back: "To Dr. Lvov."

"As a matter of fact, he's already an Assistant Professor."

"No, 'Doctor' is better," Masha replied, after thinking a moment, and before I could come to my senses the note was being passed along the row of seats adjoining the place where Mitya sat.

A few people turned round, bewildered, and then Masha began gesturing so vigorously, pointing out for whom the note was intended, that a little old man in pince-nez who was sitting next to us at last lost his patience and whispered:

"Please be quieter!"

Meanwhile, Nikolai Vasilyevich, half-rising, said:

"The next paper will be read by Professor Kramov."

A stir of interest ran through the crowded hall and Kramov, looking pale, with pudgy cheeks and very well dressed, advanced to the rostrum carrying a single slim sheet of paper in his hand and leaned his head to one side expectantly.

* * *

Now, of course, I understand quite clearly the place of this Congress in the development of Soviet science. Those were years of "crises." Not without reason did the famous surgeon F. speak of "surgery at the crossroads," while another surgeon, not less famous, O., replied to him with a book entitled: *Surgery on the Road.* S.'s bold *Theory of Medicine*, which they argued about as an outstanding event two or three years later, had appeared not long before in the form of a short article, published together with other articles which have long since been deservedly forgotten. Already at that time one could see the emergence of that complex but rewarding process whereby the introduction into biology of the methods of the exact sciences had made possible the rise of sciences hitherto unknown. In the sphere of practical medicine, hot disputes were raging about what determines the success of a patient's treatment: science, or the doctor's instinct. In numerous arguments "clinical thinking" was counterposed to "laboratory thinking," and absolutely everyone concerned himself with this problem, beginning with the well-known Professor O., who declared that a diagnosis must be made "not only with the brain but also with the spinal marrow," and ending with a student writing his first case history.

"What is medicine—an art, or the craft of repairing human machines?" A debate on this question had been held at the House of Scientists not long before the Congress, with the most prominent professors of our Institute taking part. The preventive tendency in Soviet medicine (by the way, the People's Commissar's address to the Congress was devoted to this subject) was seeking and finding new organizational forms, and the medical periodicals were full of lively controversies about the dispensary system, outpatient departments, the fight against private practice, and so on. But the main idea around which the old and the new clashed with particular force was the idea of science as a collective process. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that it was over this idea above all that the two paths of development clashed, the path of a planned, flexible organization, working on a series of cross-referenced experiments with the aim of discovering the truth as rapidly as possible, and the path of the isolated research worker looking about him in the hope of discovering any, even an unimportant but unknown fact. Precisely this idea drew the line of distinction between those who thought science had got into a blind alley, and those who claimed that the blind alley had caught not science but the inventors of "crises," whose books reflected only their individual spiritual dramas. The latter included some famous scientists who stood out with the greatest of obstinacy for the sterile conception of "science for science's sake."

"There's not enough struggle in our work," a scientist who strongly upheld the idea of the "collective scientific process" wrote in those days. And a struggle began.

He was right. It was just then that the stubborn struggle for Soviet science began, the struggle for its materialist principles, for a purposeful, practical direction; and this struggle lasted many years.

## THE PAPER

According to the agenda, a certain Professor Gorsky was to speak after Kramov, his subject being *The Territorial Distribution of Intestinal Infections*, and Masha, who was bored, was urging me to come with her to see the new film *Diplomatic Bag*, which in her opinion was the culminating achievement of cinematic art, when Nikolai Vasilyevich, winking cunningly, announced that he was going to give the floor to Assistant Professor Dmitri Dmitriyevich Lvov. This was unexpected, for Mitya had told me himself that the "old boys" had postponed his paper until the final session. Later I learnt that this had been fixed by Nikolai Vasilyevich himself; among the leading figures of the Congress he and he alone belonged to "the young," despite his sixty-three years.

Mitya was a little pale, from anxiety. Stretching his arms wide apart he seized the rostrum and for a long time he didn't leave go of it, as though he feared that he might take off and float away to the ends of the earth, away from *Symbiosis in Connection with Virus Infections*, which was the complicated name he had given to his paper. He began slowly and without confidence, trying to get used to the huge hall, in which a subdued sound of voices could still be heard. The harsh light of a lamp which was fixed somewhere in the rostrum itself shone from below upon his face, irritating him. But with every minute that passed his voice became calmer and his sentences shorter.

In essence, Mitya's main idea was a very simple one. Nobody doubted that when viruses entered a human organism they encountered microbes. What was the outcome of the repetition of such encounters over thousands of years? On the basis of experiments, the results of which were summarized in charts which he hung one after another on the board behind him, he showed that a virus, which was by its very nature hundreds of times smaller than a bacterium, had acquired the ability to propagate in a bacterial cell....

"Brave man," said a voice behind me.

"Or else he doesn't know Kramov," another replied, ironically.

I turned round. They were Army doctors, elderly, bespectacled men with intelligent faces.

"But don't you agree that he's quite right?"

"Yes, that may be so.... But to speak against Kramov.... Do you know Kramov?"

"No."

"He's a diabolical character. A mixture of Talleyrand and Yudushka Golovlev!"*

A diabolical character.... And, after finding Kramov among the members of the presidium, I gazed for a long time upon his pale and almost vacant face. He was listening politely to Mitya.

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* Character in Saltykov-Shchedrin's *Messieurs Golovlev*.

As Mitya spoke there was something almost poetic in the well-proportioned flow of his ideas. Another thing struck me, though. It was only the previous day that I had told him that the old doctor thought that viruses were a special form of existence of protein. And today... with what bold arguments he was striving to maintain the correctness of this idea! As I listened to him I could hardly believe my ears. Could it really have been only yesterday? He quoted Mechnikov's last words: "I am glad to be dying at a time when little remains to be done in ordinary bacteriology, so that the future belongs to the bacteriology of invisible microbes." He declared that the health service would inevitably run into a blind alley if the study of viruses were not accorded State importance.

"Do you remember the influenza epidemic which swept the entire world in 1918 and 1920 and carried off more than twenty million human lives?" he asked. "Just pause a moment before that monstrous figure. Compare with this calamity the World War, which carried off nine millions. And think what importance in the life of mankind attaches to the modest profession to which we are devoting our powers!"

I was listening with rapt attention and didn't notice when and why it was that a change of mood became noticeable in the hall. Perhaps it was at that moment when Mitya made a dot on the blackboard behind the rostrum and declared that this dot represented what we knew about viruses and the whole of the rest of the blackboard what we didn't know. A hardly audible titter sounded here and there in the audience when he said that absence of method in the struggle against virus diseases could lead to countless losses. He asserted that the way to solve the riddle of many incurable diseases was to follow the direction indicated by the virus theory, and a voice in the gallery drawled:

"Re-al-ly?"

Mitya paled. He stood with his head lifted, and I was afraid that he would turn round at that moment and see Kramov's pudgy, pale face, on which a gloating expression had appeared. But Mitya didn't turn round.

"A disease which it is hard to discern and easy to confuse with others," he said, "which steals up unnoticed; from which every tenth person dies; against which there is no preventive treatment because it arises in conditions which are almost impossible to forecast; a mysterious and merciless disease—you know, I expect, to which disease I refer. Well, my colleagues and myself have not the slightest doubt as to the virus nature of cancer...."

It was then that a noise broke out in the hall, not the restrained noise which had been heard previously, but a deafening row! It was in vain that Masha and I shushed and that Nikolai Vasilyevich banged loudly on his bell. The uproar, in which indignant cries mingled confusedly, became still louder:

"Observe the rules!"

"Time!"

The old man who had been angry with Masha and me had for a long time been staring at Mitya with astonishment as though he could not believe his ears, and suddenly he burst out with a deafening shout of:

"Rubbish!"

* * *

Nikolai Vasilyevich announced that the discussion of Mitya's paper would be held over until the following session. Everybody began to leave the hall and I could see from their animated faces that they were talking about the paper. Mitya was still on the dais, taking down his charts, collecting up his papers.

I wanted to tell him that he had read a splendid paper, but this was impossible, because Masha wouldn't go away. Evidently she thought that now we would flirt with Mitya.

"Masha dear, don't be angry with me. I must have a talk with him. I'll introduce you another time."

I was afraid she would be very offended. But she only looked at me meaningly and said:

"Ah. . . . I understand."

Then she said good-bye, drily, and went away. Doubtless she felt that she had never made a greater sacrifice in her life.

"Dmitri Dmitrich. . ." I stopped him as he was coming down from the dais.

"Oh, it's you! Good evening."

"Good evening. I wanted to tell you. It was wonderful, what you said To you, of course, it doesn't matter what I. . . . But I agreed with you."

"Thank you. I was carried away and said more than I meant to. This work has hardly begun."

And Mitya shook my hand firmly.

"Thanks for your note, too," he added with a smile. "I read it, and was envious."

"Why?"

"I don't know. That you're so sweet. And love poetry. And young. But where's Andrei?"

Mitya said this as though he had been with Andrei only a few minutes previously.

"Andrei? Is he in Leningrad?"

"Didn't you know?"

"Why didn't he tell me he was coming?"

"I haven't the faintest idea. But he must be here somewhere. We arranged to meet after my paper."

I would see Andrei today! It was as though I had opened a window into my heart just a little, looked in, and quickly turned away so as not to see all the confusion of contradictory feelings of which it was full.

"I wonder where he could have gone to?" Mitya was saying meanwhile, as he looked around. "We had only just said hullo when Nikolai Vasilyevich announced my paper. I wasn't able to ask him anything. I don't even know where he's staying. He asked after you," Mitya recalled suddenly.

"I told him you were at the Congress, and even showed him your note. Did he really not come up to you?"

"No."

I walked on ahead.

Mitya caught up with me (it was on the stairs) and looked me in the face.

"Are you hiding something from me?"

"Why, no!"

"Well, then, he's waiting for us in the entrance-hall."

But the hall was empty. Only Masha, who had been standing in front of the mirror, flung her mackintosh carelessly over her shoulder and walked out, giving me an indifferent, slighting glance.

"Well, it looks as though he must have gone straight to my place," said Mitya. "He knows I'm staying at the 'Europe.'"

It was still quite light when we left the Philharmonic Society. The recognized season of white nights should have ended long ago, and true-born Leningraders regarded it as being already over. But the streets still held the indefinite, diffused light of the white nights, which always seemed to me somehow disturbing.

"One thing that worried me was that he's got very thin. His eyes are very large, his neck is skinny, his tuft sticks up! I got the impression he was upset about something. I asked him if that was so, but he said it wasn't."

Some doctors were standing at the entrance to the Hotel Europe, talking together in loud voices, and one of them nodded to Mitya. He returned the nod, but didn't stop, indicating very politely that he was not alone.

"Excuse me a moment, Tanya, I'll go and see the hall-porter."

The porter said that somebody had asked for Mitya, but a long time before, about four that afternoon.

"What's all this nonsense! Where has Andrei got to?"

"Perhaps he's waiting for you in your room."

"No, the porter holds the key."

"Well, perhaps he called on. . . ."

Mitya looked sombrely at me.

"No, that couldn't be, either. She's gone to Moscow," he said sharply, without naming Glafira Sergeyevna. "Well, never mind, let's wait. Let's have some coffee."

We went into the restaurant. There was nothing special in the fact that Andrei, for some reason which was probably quite trivial, had left the Philharmonic Society without waiting for his brother. But he hadn't come to find me, that was what I couldn't understand.

"Do you know what you look like?" Mitya put his fists together to look at me through them as through a spyglass. "As though you'd been sentenced to death. What a darling you are! You're worried about Andrei? I'll have a word with him about this. I drank some coffee and stopped worrying. Two more glasses," he said to the waitress.

"I don't want any more, thank you."

"Drink it!"

"I can't, Dmitri Dmitrich."

"All right then. Only one." The waitress went away. "Excitement always gives me the appetite of a wolf. No, what you look like," said Mitya unexpectedly, "is as though you know very well where he is!"

He said this at the very moment when I was thinking that perhaps Andrei and I had missed each other accidentally at the Philharmonic Society and he'd gone to my place. It was not to be wondered at what I blushed.

"No, I don't know. But I've got to go. Do you think you could see me home, Dmitri Dmitrich? We'll ask whether Andrei called at the hostel."

* * *

I ought to have told Mitya long before this what had happened in Anzersk Settlement. I ought to have told him the first day, the first moment that I saw him. Then I should not have had to explain now why it was impossible that

Andrei should not have called on me. "I'll tell him now," I thought, trying to convince myself that I must. "Now? Oh, no! Why not? Because Mitya will ask why I haven't told him before."

And all the time while we were riding in the rapid tram and talking about Mitya's paper and looking at the Neva, where a fog was floating or rather trailing along, and at the barges which, hardly visible, were also somehow trailing along in the fog, I was pondering: "To tell or not to tell?"

It was already a quarter to nine when we reached the hostel. I roused the porter, who was sleeping soundly in an arm-chair at the door of his room, and he said that "a nice young man" had called at five to see me.

"But he didn't come in now? This evening?"

"No."

Distracted and wondering what we should do, we stood in the entrance and Mitya was about to go back to the hotel when the porter suddenly remembered that the "nice young man" had left a note. Grunting, he returned into his room and fumbled about in it for a long time, knocking chairs over and losing his temper with somebody. Then he came back with a little note.

"Tanya, my own. I am, as you see, in Leningrad. Your room-mates said that you were in the department, or if not there then at Nina's, or if not at Nina's then at Lena Bystrova's. Anyway, if I don't find you I'll see you at the Congress. But it's still four hours till the Congress opens—a hell of a long time. I've brought you a hundred and one presents. Darling, dearest, how miserable I've been without you!

"Your Andrei."

* * *

I read this note aloud, omitting the concluding phrase, and Mitya asked sombrely who Nina and Lena were.

"Friends of mine."

"Does he know them?"

"He knows Nina. She's from Lopakhin, too. You know her yourself."

"Don't remember her. So, perhaps he's at Nina's."

"She's not back from her holidays yet."

Mitya lit a cigarette.

"No," he said dispiritedly, after a silence, "something's happened to him. What can we do?"

"We could phone Lena. But they've had the receiver off, the last few days. Her father's very ill. Dmitri Dmitrich, what do you think, shall I go and call on Lena? We have an agreed code-sign. I knock on the wall and she opens the door to me. And you go back home."

"What are you thinking of? I'll go with you."

"It's a long way off, on Mezhdunarodny Avenue."

"Never mind."

That nerve in his cheek was quivering just as it used to in Agnia Petrovna's when she was excited. As he sat in the tram, he said:

"He's not at Lena's."

"Dmitri Dmitrich, I assure you, nothing's happened to him."

"You don't know Andrei. It's impossible that he shouldn't have waited for me after my paper."

"I know him better than you think I do."

"All the more so. As a matter of fact, he did seem a bit odd."

"You're imagining things!"

"I am not. It passed through my mind at the time, but only vaguely, because I had to speak in a moment or two. But it comes back to me now, he was very worried."

"What about?"

"I don't know. He went pale when we spoke about you," Mitya recalled suddenly. "Yes, that's it. He went pale and asked, 'So she said nothing to you?' And at that very moment Nikolai Vasilyevich announced my paper. What was it you were to have told me, Tanya?"

I made no reply. We descended from the tram. For some reason the front door of the house where the Bystrovs lived was closed. Mitya rang.

The care-taker appeared in the dark hallway, dragging her slippers.

"Tanya, please, I beg you, tell me what it's all about?"

We mounted the dark flight of stairs leading to the first floor.

"Has Andrei written to you recently?" I asked.

"No. I've had only one letter from him, and that was just before I left Moscow."

"Well, you see. . . ."

A lamp was burning on the second floor.

"Tanya, please! I'm not going any further. What difference will it make if we find that Andrei was here today and asked for you?"

"And what difference will it make if I. . . ."

We were now once more going up a dark flight of stairs. A few steps ahead was light again and I could see the Bystrovs' blue letter-box hanging on their black, oil-cloth-covered door.

". . .if I tell you that Andrei and I are going to get married?"

It was foolish of me to cry, but not funny in the least, and from Mitya's expression I saw that he did not find it a laughing matter, either. He took my hand, sat me down on the window-sill (there were some low window-sills on the stairs) and sat by my side without saying anything.

"Now then, I want to know everything," he said tenderly when I had stopped crying, and stroked my hair as though I were a little girl. "Why have you kept quiet about it for so long? Why are you crying? And, the most important thing—where's Andrei?"

"I don't know where he is!"

"Sh-h-h. Well, all right, never mind. He won't have fallen through the earth, anyway. And now. . . ."

Taking my hand in his, he gripped it firmly and made to kiss it, but I pulled my hand away....

"Dear, sweet Tanya, I wish you well, with all my heart. It's marvellous that you're marrying Andrei, because you're both somehow bright and pure and you'll make a splendid pair. But why didn't that dummy tell me? It just baffles me. If I had a fiancée like you I'd shout the news at every street corner."

I lifted my eyes. His expression was kind and his voice sounded cordial and straightforward.

"Thanks, Dmitri Dmitrich. But it's all ... far from being as simple as that. You can't imagine how fond I am of Andrei. But that day when I received the letter from him—it was in Anzersk Settlement—the letter in which he asked me whether I shared his feelings ... I couldn't make up my mind, even so, to answer 'yes,' though I'd never met anybody better than him, and I'd often thought that I'd never meet anybody better."

Someone, evidently not in a hurry, was coming up the stairs, and I was talking more and more quietly, till at last my voice fell to a whisper and Mitya had to move and come closer to me to hear what I was saying.

"But then when at last I had decided to tell him my answer was 'no,' things went beyond me, because he fell ill. And I.... He was near death and I couldn't.... It came out accidentally. But you won't tell him that, will you? You know, Dmitri Dmitrich, when I went to see him just before I left, he said that he wanted me to think about that moment when I pitied him. What could I have made up that wouldn't have grieved or offended him? And now, you see, when he's come...."

I stopped—not because everything had been said but because my words were so trivial and wretched in comparison with what I felt at that moment. And so unlike the truth!

Mitya looked at me sadly.

"And you think that that will work out all right for you?"

"What will work out all right for me?"

"Why, not marrying Andrei."

"Dmitri Dmitrich...."

"Please don't think I'm joking," said Mitya hastily, "or that I don't appreciate what's happened between you. But I can see perfectly well that you love him."

Embarrassed, I said:

"What do you mean?"

"Yes, yes," Mitya repeated, in a tone of deep conviction. "You'll have doubts about it for a long time, and torture yourself and him, and it will all end with your wasting the best years of your life. No, Tanyechka, you...."

He took me by the arm but at that moment, from somewhere very near us, on the other side of the wall, we heard a cry.

The door was flung open and Lena Bystrova, her hair loose and wearing a dressing-gown, so that I didn't recognize her immediately, rushed out on to the landing.

"Lena!"

She turned and ran to me.

"Is it you, Tanya? What a good thing that you've come! I was going to call the Emergency Medical Aid, but Father.... He's very bad. Let's go in, quickly! He won't let me go."

## SIMPLY BY ACCIDENT

We were standing in the hall of the Bystrovs' flat and Lena was talking, but I could not make head or tail of it—neither what had happened that morning, when Vasily Alexeyevich had accidentally cut his finger and for three hours they hadn't been able to stop the flow of blood, nor what had happened just recently when for some reason they had needed the Emergency Medical Aid Service. Maria Nikandrovna had gone to the chemist's and had been away a long time. Vasily Alexeyevich had fallen asleep and then suddenly had started to get up, and was furious at Lena when she forced him to lie down again. Lena talked with feverish excitement, with a kind of helpless haste; she mixed things up, tried to find the analyses. I looked hard at her and didn't recognize her. I understood nothing till I followed Lena into the dining-room. I went in and was brought up short with surprise as I saw the bed, which showed faintly white, and the close-cropped, bony head which lay motionless on the high pillows.

I had had occasion time and again to see how terribly illness changes people. In one case, for example, I'd had a patient whose face changed nearly every hour. But what I saw when I drew near to Vasily Alexeyevich wasn't just a change. It was the complete and final disappearance of the man I had known, calm, slow, thoughtful, wonderfully definite in every gesture and word, and the appearance of another man; a shrivelled-up old man with a square skull, whose bones stuck out distinctly under his tight-drawn skin; this change had taken place in the course of a few days. The yellow colour of his face (Vasily Alexeyevich had jaundice) was usually unnoticeable under electric light. But now it was not a yellow but a strange green glow that lay on the exhausted face and on the thin hands, helplessly stretched out beside the body. And this dying man opened his eyes as we came in, and lowered his thin, greenish legs on to the carpet. Lena began to plead with her father, and it was obvious that she was trying to keep something terrible and hopeless from him, which yet showed itself against her will in all her movements and her every word.

"Daddy, darling, you mustn't! Here's the doctor come, he'll examine you now. Would you like a drink?"

Vasily Alexeyevich shook his head. The hand resting on the bed trembled.

"Weakness ... damn it," he muttered with difficulty.

Already, in the hall, I'd explained to Lena that Mitya was a doctor, and she had somehow produced a faint, unconscious smile when he joked that he was always on the spot when he was needed. Now she watched him silently.

Mitya gently made the patient lie down and sat beside the bed, and it seemed a terrible thing when hope flickered in that exhausted face. In a whisper she begged Mitya's permission to stay in the room. He shook his head.

"For God's sake, please!"

"No, no."

I led Lena away.

It was half past ten when we left the Bystrovs' flat. The patient had gone to sleep, after telling Lena that if he'd had such a doctor to treat him previously he would long since have got rid of that wretched jaundice. The outside door was locked and the care-taker, whom Mitya with some difficulty roused from her bed, asked sympathetically, when she learnt from which flat we'd come:

"Is he dead?"

Silent, we went out into deserted and dark Mezhdunarodny Avenue. A night breeze was gently wafting the first yellow leaves over the roadway. A cab was standing outside a chemist's in whose windows coloured globes glowed drowsily.

"I'll give you a lift."

"Thank you."

"Driver!"

We settled ourselves in the cab. I asked Mitya what the patient's condition was, and he replied sadly:

"He'll live for a few days."

"So it isn't jaundice?"

"No. Do you remember Courvoisier's syndrome? He's got cancer of the pancreas, and evidently it's a deep one, too, with metastases, because his liver's affected, as well."

"Did you tell Lena?"

"Why should I? She understands everything. She's a good girl," he added thoughtfully.

"A very good girl."

We sat silent.

"What helplessness," said Mitya with sudden bitterness. "What miserable helplessness. You feel the horror of expectation which the dying man is driving out of his mind, you know that death is drawing near, inevitably and irresistibly, and it's not only that you don't know how to stop its advance, you don't even know how to ease the torment it brings! Hell! And only think that just now I was talking about the virus nature of cancer.... Well, all right! All that's still to come."

The driver turned into Lev Tolstoi Street.

"Well, my dear, what are we going to do about Andrei?"

"Dmitri Dmitrich, I think I ought.... We'll meet and I'll tell him everything. What do you think?"

I said this in despair; my voice broke, and Mitya looked at me closely.

"Yes, of course." His face had suddenly become cold and discontented, as it always did when he was tired.

"I'll go now to my place, to the Hotel Europe; then, if Andrei hasn't been there, straight to the Central Militia Office."

"I'll ring you, Dmitri Dmitrich. Your number's 224, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"At about twelve."

"All right."

"And if Andrei's at your hotel, tell him that I'm waiting for him. I'll wait all day. I won't go off anywhere."

"I'll tell him. Good night."

* * *

I was sleeping uneasily, feeling guilty towards somebody all the time in my dreams, when my room-mates woke me up and told me, interrupting each other, that a messenger in a red cap had called for me.

"What for?"

"He brought you a letter."

"What letter?"

"It's in your hand! Wake up, sleepy-head!"

I threw a coat over myself and went out into the dining-room, as there was never anybody there in the evening. The letter was from Andrei:

"Dear Tanya, I expect you were very surprised that you didn't meet me at the Philharmonic Society. I was there and saw you. When you read this letter I shall already be on the train. It was by chance that I happened to have a day to spend in Leningrad, merely because Yefimov (that was the name of the Deputy People's Commissar) put off my interview till the following day.

"What has happened? I can see your face looking sad, with anxious eyes as you cry, 'What has happened?' Nothing in particular, dear. After you left I used to go down to Anzerka every day, and from there I would walk along the path—the rocky one, do you remember it?—which leads to the ravines and the salt works, and I thought and thought about you. I say I thought, but really I even talked to you and recalled every word you'd spoken. And a strange thing happened; it began to seem to me that not one Tanya but two Tanyas had been with me, in those wonderful, unforgettable days. There was one who answered 'yes' and was quite sure in herself that she couldn't answer any other way. And there was another who answered 'no' and suffered because she couldn't make up her mind to take back the promise she'd given me. Do you remember, I asked you, when you left, to think about that moment when I was near death and you were sorry for me? Already then I felt there was conflict in your mind, and later, after you'd gone, I saw it as clearly as now I can see from my hotel window a deep, narrow, dark courtyard—aren't the courtyards in Leningrad unfriendly?

"I wrote to you in Leningrad, but you didn't reply, and for the first time I thought: 'She doesn't love me.' "

The next half-page had been crossed out and the only words I could distinguish were: "Don't think I'm reproaching you." Then came distinct and firm lines again, written without any wavering:

"Well, Tanya dearest! At the Congress I caught sight of your bright, laughing face, so far away from all that my heart was full of, and it was as though someone's hand had turned the light of a lamp on to the surmise which had grown in half-darkness within me. I realized that I had been deceiving myself, and for no better reason than I didn't want to believe the sad thought: she doesn't love me.

"Afterwards I went up to Mitya. It was hard asking about you. But I did ask, and then I realized that you hadn't told him about what happened between us in Anzersk Settlement. Why not? And I answered myself: because she doesn't love me.

"That's all! I'll write to you. Sometimes, if you'll let me, I'll come and see you and ask, 'Is everything as it was?' I'll do a lot of work: do you remember how we talked about great discoveries being made in out-of-the-way villages, too? You mustn't think that I've grown to love you any less.

"Ever yours, Andrei."

Clutching this letter, my coat flung over my nightdress, I rushed into the hall and shouted to the porter:

"Pyotr Frantsevich, give me a ten-kopek piece; quickly, quickly!"

He spent a hundred years rummaging in his shabby old purse, for another hundred years I could get no reply from the station, and perhaps it wouldn't have answered for yet another hundred if I hadn't, in desperation, banged the instrument with my fist.

"Give me October Railway, Enquiries. It's an Inspector speaking."

What good demon it was who whispered these words to me I don't know, but the telephone girl, who replied "engaged" at any time of the day or night to such a request as this, said without hesitating:

"You're through."

"When does the next train leave for Moscow?"

"In twenty minutes time."

I shouldn't be able to see him. I shouldn't be able to see him and tell him that it was all my fault.

Students at military schools are supposed, I understand, to dress in one and a half to two minutes. I dressed quicker than that. The girls badgered me with questions, but I gave them off-hand answers and rushed headlong down the stairs, flying out into Lev Tolstoi Square.

It was useless to think of getting to the station by tram in fifteen minutes. Taxis were not even talked of in those days. But only the previous evening Masha Kolomeitseva had been telling me about one of our fifth-year students who, when his wife was confined, had lost his head, rushed out into the street, stopped the first car that came along and sent his wife off in it to the clinic. This episode came confusedly into my mind when, as I was running across the square, I saw a car in the distance, coming along Grand Avenue towards me. Should I stop it? And with beating heart I walked along the middle of the roadway to meet the car.

"What's up?"

"Comrade driver, I must get to October Station. My train leaves in fifteen minutes. I implore you!"

The driver was a gloomy-looking man, unshaven, wearing a cap with earpieces, pulled well down on his forehead. I offered him five rubles, which was all the money that I had on me.

He flung open the car door and said angrily, "Get in."

I don't know what I was babbling as I stared in at the windows of the railway carriages, and went into some of them at random. I remember that I wanted to shout, "Andrei!" as though I were lost in a wood. It seemed to me that there could be no greater misfortune in life than this, that I had lost Andrei. He was going away without seeing me, worried, feeling insulted, not knowing that I loved him, though not in the way that would make him happy, the poor, dear darling!

"Tanya!"

He was standing two paces away from me, at the door of a carriage.

"You've come!"

It wasn't long, only a few moments, that I was angry with him because, red-faced and dishevelled, I was pushing my way along the platform through the midst of the passengers struggling with their luggage, and because I was crying when he saw me. Then I ran towards him and said, all in a rush:

"I came because I can't let you go away without seeing me. I don't want us to part like this. You won't get angry with me because I don't know my own mind, will you? I was going to write to you, but I was afraid it might be a cold, constrained letter."

Andrei was wearing an old, greenish overcoat with ragged buttonholes, and I remember that I wanted to cry because of those buttonholes, too. But there was no time to think about the fact that he'd got so thin, that two whitish parallel lines had appeared on his nose, or that Mashenka must have stopped looking after him, since his buttonholes weren't sewn up. There were only three or four minutes to go before the train was due to leave.

"Yes, it's true I didn't think about you. I didn't tell Mitya anything because everything was somehow withdrawn and covered with a haze from the moment when we parted in Anzersk Settlement."

I ought simply to have taken Andrei's things off the rack and flung them through the window on to the platform. But this didn't even occur to me, doubtless because I felt so guilty. It was a punishment for me that he was going away, and a fully-deserved punishment, against which I didn't even attempt to fight.

I talked and talked. Already the bewhiskered guard had come out and blown his whistle, but I still went on talking.

"My darling, my own," said Andrei, hurriedly, at last. "Thank you for coming! Still I don't want you to think that you're bound by what you said to me in Anzersk Settlement. We'll write to each other, eh?"

The train started moving. I kissed him quickly.

"Yes, and I won't hide anything from you. You're the best person I know, my only one, my very dearest in all my life!"

He stood at the end of the carriage and nodded to me, his face bright and kind, and when the carriage was already a long way off he made a gesture with his hand once more to show that I was to write to him.

## THE ESSENCE OF A PROBLEM

It was as it had always been after the autumn storms in Lopakhin, which shook me with their savagery and primeval force: suddenly the wind would fall, the slanting wall of rain move away to the south and the trees in the Ovrazhki stop their terrifying rustle. The crazy spirit of destruction would disappear somewhere, ceasing his senseless iron thundering upon our roofs. Doors would be opened cautiously, and the people of Lopakhin would emerge timidly into the sidestreets, which would be littered with fragments of water-pipes, branches and scantlings always carried down by the wind from the mill where they had a lathe on which scantlings were made. The Tesma would return within its banks, and silence would descend upon the town.

It was with this feeling of silence suddenly fallen that, after Andrei had gone, I busied myself with my affairs at the Institute. Ahead of me I had my fifth year and the State examinations. The work Nikolai Vasilyevich had entrusted to me in the department was hardly begun.

I didn't attend the Congress again, but I heard from Rubakin that Kramov had made an interesting speech, in which he announced the organization in Moscow of an Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes. "That's where I'd like to go," said Rubakin, with enthusiasm. Colleagues in the department invited me to attend the concluding session, but

I didn't go, pleading Vasily Alexeyevich's illness, which was getting worse. This was true. I spent whole days at the Bystrovs and often stayed overnight so as to relieve the exhausted, desperate Lena. But worry, perplexity and despair quitted that house when it became quite clear that the patient's condition was hopeless. Vasily Alexeyevich was dying cheerfully and calmly, as one who had lived a great, cheerful, purposeful life, and the only regret that tortured him from time to time was that there was still much for him to do! The Moscow-Narva District House of Culture was to be opened in a few days and friends came in to see Vasily Alexeyevich and give him detailed accounts of how the plastering of the upper boxes was going or how the star on the parquet floor was being done, and he was worried because fresh material for the doors was being brought in to dry on stoves on the site itself. The chief engineer came to him for advice on the selection of colours for the main hall, and Vasily Alexeyevich stood out for turquoise and blue shades, in spite of the opinion of some important commission. On the eve of the opening ceremony he sent Lena and me to the House of Culture, and we lied to him when we came back that everything was ready, though there were still no floors in the main hall, the chairs weren't screwed down, and the walls had hardly been painted half-way. That, the Moscow-Narva District House of Culture, was what they talked about at the Bystrovs in those days. Nobody said a word about what had to happen soon, the inevitable and irresistible, and I only sometimes came upon Maria Nikandrovna in the kitchen, standing by the window and silently choking back her tears.

* * *

There were a lot of people in the waiting-room, and I realized from the first that I must be prepared to wait a long time, perhaps for two or three hours. This didn't worry me much, as I had brought with me a textbook on hygiene, an easy subject which could be studied very well even in a waiting-room. As it happened, however, I speedily found myself regretting that I had not brought the "ear and throat" book, for my neighbours, when they noticed that I was studying, took to speaking in whispers, and when some fellow gave a loud yawn just by my ear they all looked at him reproachfully, and one old lady asked with indignation, "Didn't you get enough sleep at home?" And the man blushed to the roots of his hair.

When I had phoned Mitya the evening before, he had talked to me in such an undecided, indifferent tone that I asked him:

"Do you know who's talking to you?"

"Yes, of course."

"Did you go to see the Procurator?"

He was silent, evidently trying to recall why he ought to have gone to see the Procurator.

"Not yet."

"Dmitri Dmitrich, you agreed with me that in an affair of this sort one shouldn't waste a single day."

"Yes, I did. But I promised that I'd go after the Congress is over."

Nothing had been said about his going after the Congress was over. What was this about "promising," too? One might have thought that the matter he was going to speak to the Procurator about was solely my concern.

I later learnt that Academician Nikolsky had made a long speech that day in which he dragged Mitya, amongst others, over the coals, so that he had good reason to be submerged in his private affairs and worries. Anyway, I decided not to phone him again, especially as there was an important reason why I wanted the Procurator to hear the story from me rather than from Mitya. Lyosha Dmitriyev and Lena, whose advice I sought, also both agreed that there was no sense at all in putting the thing off.

An elderly, large-featured man wearing his cap on the back of his head and his coat draped over his shoulders came out of the office, then shortly afterwards went back in again. By the interest with which he was received in the waiting-room I guessed that this was somebody who worked in the Procurator's office, but it never occurred to me that this was the City Procurator himself, that is, the chief representative of socialist law and order in the huge city of Leningrad, with its three million inhabitants.

"Please, sit down," he said, when I entered the spacious, austerely furnished office. "What do you want to see me about?"

"Comrade Garanin" (that was the Procurator's name), "I am Vlasenkova, a student at the First Medical Institute, and I've come about a matter which calls for your intervention. Perhaps not your personal intervention, but at any rate that of the Procurator's office. Professor Zaozersky" (I stressed Nikolai Vasilyevich's name as I said it, but observed with chagrin that it produced not the slightest impression on the Procurator), "whose advice I asked about this matter, recommended me to come to you personally."

He heard me out without interrupting. With his cap and coat off he looked sterner than when I had first seen him, and an expression of habitual attention had settled on his intelligent, sallow face.

"So you've come about that business," he said, when I inquired if he had received a petition from Dmitri Dmitriyevich Lvov. "Yes, I have received it."

"You see, I don't know just what Dr. Lvov's written to you," I went on, beginning to get a little worked up. "But I know the story of the late Pavel Petrovich Lebedev better than anybody else. He was my teacher and mentor when I was a child, and I can testify that his work really is of scientific importance. His life was a very unhappy one, and at the time of the October Revolution he was already a helpless old man. Nevertheless, he'd got roughly half-way through his work; and now it's fallen into the hands of this shady character. You know the person I mean, Comrade Garanin?"

The Procurator nodded. He was listening to me with interest.

"After the Revolution, Pavel Petrovich received an offer to have his work, the one in question, published. But he refused, which was natural enough because they could only evaluate it when it was completed. When Pavel Petrovich died, this manuscript was left with me, because at that time his relations.... Did Dr. Lvov tell you in his application how Rayevsky got hold of it?"

"Please tell me everything you know about this matter. Don't hurry and don't get excited."

"All right. Well, imagine a little provincial town...."

I had realized at once that I should not just tell everything indiscriminately, but should, so to speak, paint a portrait, concentrating in this portrait everything which was characteristic of Pavel Petrovich as a scientist. Perhaps it was not necessary to mention that he studied mould and attributed very powerful curative properties to it.

"And now I must tell you," I ran on very quickly because otherwise it would have been hard for me to talk about it, "that Pavel Petrovich's manuscript came into Rayevsky's possession through my fault. I don't know what Dr. Lvov has written to you about this, but the fact is that I trusted my father, left the manuscript with him, and my father...."

The Procurator smiled, and his intelligent, sallow face, with its clear-cut, large features, became softer.

"It appears to me, Comrade Vlasenkova," he said, "that there's no need for you to blame yourself in this matter. Whom should a daughter trust, if not her father? As for your father, he really is to blame, because he disposed of someone else's property at his own discretion. Moreover, his guilt is aggravated by the circumstances that the property in question was not something like spoons or saucers, but a scientific work, which belongs to the state. There is an explanatory note by your father attached to Lvov's petition. Now I can tell you that as a result of this petition a search has already been made in Citizen Rayevsky's apartment, and no scientific work of any kind has come to light."

"Why, wasn't it found?"

"And Rayevsky himself said that he knew nothing about any scientific works. He went to Lopakhin, he said, to obtain the letters of the actress Krechetova, which he has published. Had he the right to do that? Certainly, not. Indeed, this is a special charge against him, and I can only say that it goes along with other charges which the state has brought against Citizen Raevsky. But as to the scientific work written by the late Lebedev we have only your father's deposition, nothing else."

"But, Comrade Garanin, I'm absolutely sure Rayevsky has the manuscript! Dr. Lvov and I went to his place; I see now, that that was a mistake. And now.... But, still! Would he keep it at home—a scientific manuscript over which, as he knows quite well, he could be involved in some unpleasantness?"

The Procurator was listening to me attentively.

"Don't get excited, Comrade Vlasenkova," he repeated. "I think you are right. But this is what I have to ask you. First, to pass on to Professor Zaozersky my request to send me his views about the work which has been lost. Do you think he can give an opinion from what you can tell him?"

"Yes."

"And secondly, please come over here." He led me into the adjoining room and sat me at a table. "Write out for me in full detail all that I've heard from you today. Don't hurry and don't get excited. We shall hunt for this scientific work, and matters won't be left in this unsatisfactory state...."

Mitya phoned me at the hostel on the eve of his going away and I told him about my talk with the Procurator. He was surprised, and asked whether Zaozersky had written his opinion on Pavel Petrovich's work. I replied that he had, though in fact Nikolai Vasilyevich had only read it, while it was I who had written it out, from the first word to the last.

"That means everything's in order, then," Mitya said, in such a way as though it were thanks to himself that everything was in order. "And I, too, have had a word with Nikolai Vasilyevich ... about you."

"Yes? And what came of it?"

"We agreed."

"On what?"

"That you have gifts."

"What sort of gifts?"

"Scientific ones, Tanya, scientific ones. Provided you work seriously, of course."

* * *

It happened at a lecture on meningitis—inflammation of the brain membrane, one of the worst of children's diseases, only one method of dealing with which was then known, and that a highly imperfect one.

"What is this method?" asked the Professor addressing the silent lecture-hall, and from my seat I replied in a loud voice:

"Puncture."

On my word of honour, I'm ignorant to this day how this idea of puncture (of the membrane of the spinal cord) flew into my head. But I uttered the word with such confidence that the delighted Professor invited me to come out in front, apparently so that I might show off my deep knowledge of children's diseases before my astonished comrades. Trembling, I walked out in front, and it began—oh, what an experience! A tubercular case was being demonstrated and the Professor asked me a question relating to tuberculosis. I stared at him dully and said nothing. He asked another, then a third, and when in reply to a fourth question I could only produce some nonsense he shook his head and said:

"There's a puncture for you! Well, go back to your place."

Of course, the reason why I started attending lectures regularly—even those on stomatology, a subject to which I had an inexplicable aversion—was not that I was afraid of getting bad marks in my diploma or doing worse than my friends. But I thought: another year, and I'll be a doctor! Would my endeavour to show that the streptococcus, which in Anzersk Settlement had displayed such obvious loathing for the diphtheria bacillus, had not lost this feeling on arrival with me in Leningrad prove useful to me then? (I should mention that I had spent the whole of October in the lab trying to repeat this experiment.) Those books on microbiology which I had read with such effort that I have remembered all my life the almost physical strain with which I fought my way from page to page—would they prove useful? Would my ability to insert a needle into the finest vein of a rabbit's ear help me at the moment when I would be all alone by a patient's bedside? When it would not be an experimental animal that lay before me but a human being, who had his own happy or unhappy life, depending on me and looking at me with trust and hope in his eyes?

I couldn't, of course, and didn't want to decide this problem on a personal plane. The Komsomol cell of our Institute had just come forward as organizer of a campaign under the slogan: "Doctors, to the countryside!" *The Medical Worker* had appeared with a cover on which the head of the Appointments Office was showing medical students just graduating, on a map of the U.S.S.R., the areas where there were vacancies for doctors. No answer would be required to this question if it were not for my microbiology, of the practical value of which I had increasing doubts.

The simplest thing to do was to ask my friends' advice, and this I did. First I asked Olya; to her it was plain that I should do scientific research and nothing else. Then I asked Lena; she had no doubt that I ought to devote myself to the work of a practising doctor. Several days passed, and finally I became muddled, because Lyosha Dmitriyev told me that the cell bureau had decided to nominate me for scientific work in Professor Zaozersky's department.

In the last analysis, the heart of the problem was that I had to choose between two paths in life which seemed to me very far apart. The first path, that of scientific research, demanded not merely perseverance and knowledge but also talent, which perhaps I lacked. "The way lies through doubt and searching," Nikolai Vasilyevich had said. "And yet what moments of glory there are for a man who finds even one grain of a general truth which explains a hitherto unsolved secret of nature!"

The second path, that of practice, would lead me right into the very midst of life.

These two paths were counterposed in my mind with especial sharpness when I attended the funeral of Vasily Alexeyevich Bystrov.

It was a bright October day, one of those days when it seems as though summer has come back, but only to say good-bye for a long time. The public square through which we were walking behind the coffin was dry, and the trees stood light and gay, as though they were not sorry to lose the last leaves which still trembled on their branches. The sky was pale but bright, with some small, delicate clouds high up.

I cried a great deal during the civil burial service, and now, when I came out into the spacious avenue, I drew a deep breath. There were so many people at the funeral that when we came out the militia held up the traffic for several minutes, but amongst them there were no relations of the dead man apart from Maria Nikandrovna and Lena, and I remembered Lena saying that she had felt drawn towards me with particular warmth when she learnt that I had no relations, distant or near, except my father. Again and again my throat contracted when I remembered Lena standing motionless by the head of the coffin, looking steadily into her father's dead face. But I swallowed my tears, and all the way to Volkov Cemetery I thought that I had made a mistake in spending two years in the microbiology department, amongst laboratory glassware, infinitely far away from human torments and sufferings.

The farewell to the dead man had been spoken at the funeral ceremony, but a further farewell took place here in the cemetery, after the speeches. His green face seemed strange in the clear light of day, in the open air, among the living flowers; he seemed to be gravely considering something inexplicably mysterious which was happening to him. And Mitya's speech at the Congress, his passionate call to struggle against cancer, came back to me.

"A fearful and merciless disease. A disease which can easily be confused with others, and hard to discern because it steals up unnoticed. This disease is an enigma! Who will solve it and when?"

They were still coming up to the coffin, kissing him on the brow and kissing his thin hand, which was also green. There was Lena bending over her father for the last time and saying something to him in a whisper. Now the coffin was being screwed down and lowered with ropes into the grave. Those thick, overwound ropes, and the workers, red in the face, holding the coffin in midair with an effort, their high-boots squeezing deeply into the clay soil, all seemed coarse and crude. Now the first lumps of earth were falling with a dull sound upon the coffin; and a hillock covered with flowers arose above the fresh-dug grave.

## SEND-OFF

When I was still in my fourth year many people at the Institute were saying that Nikolai Vasilyevich was going to move to Moscow. At the Congress, too, I had heard that it had been decided to set up the new Institute of Epidemiology, which Nikolai Vasilyevich was to head, in Moscow and not in Leningrad. But these were only vague rumours, and nobody in the department, for instance, took any notice of them. How, indeed, could we believe that a day would come when none of us would hear Nikolai Vasilyevich's harsh cough, and his "The Broad Dnieper Is Roaring and Groaning," and his light-hearted, youthful laugh, when it was suddenly discovered that the experimental cat had eaten the biscuits prepared for next Friday's tea. (This cat was sometimes used for experiments, and spent the rest of its time catching rats in the vivarium.) How could one imagine the department without Nikolai Vasilyevich; one of its rooms contained the collections which he had brought from China, India and Egypt, while in another hung Mechnikov's portrait with the inscription: "To a fearless pupil from his admiring teacher, with the wish for his success in the fight against our microscopic foes!" Everything in the department was permeated with his thought and had been shaped according to his ideas.

At the beginning of January, Petya Rubakin told me that Nikolai Vasilyevich would combine work at the Moscow and Leningrad institutes until the end of the current academic year, but at the beginning of the next one he would finally move to Moscow. The day of the send-off had been fixed, and one Tanya Vlasenkova, Rubakin said, would be charged with delivering the farewell speech on behalf of the department.

The Institute had arranged a ceremonial meeting in Nikolai Vasilyevich's honour, to be held in a few days' time. It was not really a meeting, but an ordinary Friday tea, which everybody working in the department attended, bringing flowers, because everyone knew that Nikolai Vasilyevich loved fresh flowers. There were posies everywhere, in the windows and on the cupboards, all of hortensia, because it was difficult to find any other flowers in Leningrad in the winter-time.

Nikolai Vasilyevich arrived in a new black suit which, as everybody knew, he had had made for the Congress but it hadn't been ready in time, the tailor having swindled him. His first words were to inform us that the day before he had asked the People's Commissar for permission to take the entire department with him to Moscow.

"He asked me, 'How many people are there?' I replied, 'Thirty-four, including the students.' 'Rather too many,' he said. But how can they be too many if I need them all, my own, dear people?"

I had never attended any of these Friday teas. They were occasions when those who worked in the department behaved at their ease, like friends, quite differently from the way they behaved at work. True, I was no longer the girl who, having decided to devote herself to science, had secretly smuggled herself into the Professor's study and hidden behind the door-curtain. Nevertheless I felt uncertain, constrained and awkward. At one moment, I felt that I could and even should have been drawn into the serious talk which was going on between Nikolai Vasilyevich and Petya. At another, I sat on the divan and began rapidly rehearsing my speech in my head.

Meanwhile the speeches had begun, and it was already obvious that Nikolai Vasilyevich himself wanted to make a speech. He looked moved but at the same time somehow as though he was suffering impatiently. Then suddenly my turn came. I stood up, coughed and began, "Dear Nikolai Vasilyevich..." then stopped, because I found that I couldn't remember a word. It was a disaster. I stood there looking dumbfounded, clutching my glass desperately.

"What's up, forgotten it?" Nikolai Vasilyevich asked.

Everybody burst out laughing. I remembered what I wanted to say, and it actually turned out to be a good thing that I'd been so worried, for I said something quite different from what I had prepared, and what I said was much more serious and thoughtful.

Nikolai Vasilyevich kissed me and wept a little. When young people saluted him he was always touched. Instead of making a speech in reply, he told us how in 1919 there had been a rumour at the Institute, in the Microbiological Society, in fact everywhere, that he was dead and homage was paid to his memory by standing in silence. Academician Korovin, who all his life had argued that Nikolai Vasilyevich was none other than Don Quixote, tilting at windmills, wrote an article in which he compared him simultaneously to Mechnikov and Pasteur.

"Afterwards, they say, he tore his hair," said Nikolai Vasilyevich. "And he declared, the so-and-so, that I had deliberately arranged this trick.... Well, Tanya," he said to me when the tea was over and I was sitting next to him, "you'll come to Moscow to join me, won't you?"

"No, Nikolai Vasilyevich."

"What's the matter with you? Why not?"

"Because I've decided to give up microbiology. I want to work as a practical doctor."

"What's this?" He took my hand and looked me in the eye. "This is a serious conversation, I suppose; eh, Tanya?"

"Yes."

He pondered.

"Come and see me at home tomorrow, between two and three. What is she thinking of? A practical doctor!"

## THE TEACHER

Nothing had been finally settled, but although the group committee nominated me as before for post-graduate work, I was more and more inclined towards medical practice. I realized that I had been tortured by these doubts when I wrote my first case-history, a sorrowful story which ended with the words: "Diagnosis doubtful." Had I not asked myself at the meeting of the Komsomol cell which dealt with Korsavin's case: "And aren't *you* going to return to the State the money spent on your instruction?" When I had moved on from quiet therapeutic clinics to encounter in isolation wards the feverish struggle going on in every bed, and saw with my own eyes the intense effort of life striving to overcome death, had I not wanted to rush headlong into this work? Yes, I had been thinking about this for a long time.

But then a strange thing happened. Hardly had I begun to visualize the work of a general practitioner when the thought of our department came back to me, with a force of temptation which was quite frightening. Did it mean that I would never again experience that wonderful feeling I always had as I approached the entrance to the laboratory? Would I never again know that secret excitement as I tried not to frighten away an idea, still indefinite, that touched gingerly upon something unfamiliar, about which nobody else in the world knew anything? And that hope, even if it was a childish one, that a day of triumph would come when what I was doing would be the concern of millions of hearts? I still had not forgotten it. And the old doctor's institute, where everything was just as he wanted it, and which invariably came back to my mind whenever I had one of my few successes?...

I wasn't lucky. When I returned from Nikolai Vasilyevich's farewell party I opened Timiryazev at random, began to read, and stumbled upon a passage which only made me waver the more. This was it:

> "You ought to be ashamed of yourself, says the indignant moralist to the man of science. Around you, people are living in poverty, and you are preoccupied with the problem of the origin of this grey deposit at the bottom of your retort! Death is carrying off fathers who are the sole support of their families and tearing children from their anguished mothers, while you rack your brains over whether some specks under your microscope are alive or dead. Smash your retorts, come out of your laboratory, help the sick, bring a word of consolation where the doctor's art is helpless."

But now forty years have passed and these imaginary personages meet again. Now it is the scientist who speaks:

"You were right, I didn't help the sick; but behold entire peoples whom I have protected from sickness. I didn't comfort bereaved fathers and mothers; but behold thousands of fathers and mothers to whom I returned their children who were doomed to inevitable death. And all this was in that grey deposit at the bottom of my retort, and in those specks which had moved about under my microscope!"

* * *

Nikolai Vasilyevich had given me the time when he would be going home for lunch, and he was a good forty minutes late. He turned up at last, gay and carrying some flowers, and was heartily astonished at finding me in his study.

"Why do you look so down in the mouth, my dear girl?" he asked. "Were you going to make another speech and have you forgotten it? Sit down there and tell me all about it. Don't be cross because I'm late. To make up for it I won't have lunch at home."

He pushed me into an arm-chair and himself sat on the window-sill.

That moment rises before me as I saw it with the clear vision of youth. The sunshine was glinting on the shining furniture, which was covered with bright, striped material, on the hard, gleaming fig-trees, on the inkstand, on the Buddha, with its idly-attentive look, which acted as paperweight on the table. Nikolai Vasilyevich, stocky, with his greying beard and his carelessly-tied necktie, sat with his short arms folded on his chest, preparing to listen patiently to me. He was very serious, doubtless so as not to give offence to his pupil. But irony flashed in his dark, lively eyes, and this made me even more embarrassed than ever.

"Well?"

It was altogether a long and incoherent story I told, and only two conclusions could be drawn from it: first, that I had firmly decided to devote myself to the life of a doctor in a country practice, and secondly, that at the bottom of my heart I nevertheless wanted Nikolai Vasilyevich not to agree with my arguments, but to send me off to busy myself with theory.

"Well, now, Tanya, my dear," he said seriously when he had heard me out. "There was once an occasion, wasn't there, when I advised you to read *Don Quixote.* I prefer it when people find their own path by the stars out of the dark forest, without asking the way. But I've grown fond of you, and therefore I'll try to answer your questions. You ask: ought you to devote yourself to practical medicine? I answer: no, you ought not. Why? Because you've a theoretical brain. Everything that interests you, you turn, without meaning to (indeed, one might say against your will), theoretical side uppermost. There you were, telling me about the illness of Lena Bystrova's father. And what did you talk about? What concerned you most of all? Not the clinical picture, not the problem of how to relieve the patient's sufferings, but the secret of the disease itself, before which the greatest minds in medical science stand helpless. Yes, you've a theoretical brain. Of course, that's not much by itself, you must have good hands, too. But that, my dear, depends on yourself. So then—scientific research is your field. Second question: when you leave the Institute should you go to the country, or wherever they send you? Of course you should! Why? Because this can only be useful for your scientific interests."

As he spoke I listened, with a feeling as though I were in a large hall through which I had been wandering in darkness and where lights began to come on first in one corner and then in another, and while it was still half-dark the doors had become visible through which I could go out into the fresh air.

"Do I have to demonstrate to you that one can and must study science in the countryside? Didn't you bring your extremely interesting work here from a village, one of the most out-of-the-way villages, seventy miles from the railway line? Do you know, the fact that in the countryside there isn't the complex interaction of factors which exists in towns is sometimes helpful in solving important questions? Would you like some examples? Here you are: local diseases—say goitre, trachoma, encephalitis. It's precisely on the material provided by a country practice that their statistics, treatment, and results need to be studied. And the mysterious action of poisonous plants? Do we know much about the bactericidal properties of the folk medicines which can be bought at any chemist's? I don't even mention the possibility of a consistent, scientifically-conducted struggle against some particular disease which is characteristic of the given district—a dazzling, fascinating task! My dear girl, I know some of the greatest scientists who go to the countryside in search of solutions to the most complex problems of theoretical medicine. There you are, that's one aspect of the matter. But another side is important for you, too."

Nikolai Vasilyevich was silent, sighed and asked my permission to lie down.

"Now, I," he said, stretched out on the divan, "had no such doubts when I was young. I went straight into the laboratory, and it turned out that I was able to achieve something, though only because in those days a bacteriological laboratory was in itself a novelty in medical science. So that one can't say those were wasted years for science, on the organizational side at any rate. But a day came where I felt that I was turning into a dreary collector of facts which rose before me unexpectedly, as though out of a fog. I was beginning to dwell on secondary matters in the same way as on the main things—that was the typical feature of my state of mind. And a catastrophe had to happen for me to realize that science must not be segregated from life under the lenses of microscopes."

And Nikolai Vasilyevich told me how, when he was still a young man working at the Odessa bacteriological station, he had carried out a mass inoculation of sheep against anthrax, and 3,000 beasts had died from an unknown cause.

"From an unknown cause! But in fact the cause was simply this, that the experiment, which I had tried to apply on so wide a scale, had not been tested by life. That was a catastrophe for me!" Nikolai Vasilyevich repeated slowly. "There you are, my dear. So I say—forward, boldly! How old are you—twenty-two? You're no lily-handed one, and, praise be, your health's good. So look with open eyes upon life, of which you still have no knowledge at all. You'll run into difficulties, but that's practically unavoidable. You'll overcome them, especially if you never forget that really you're devilishly lucky. Before the Revolution you could have done nothing with your calling. And in the country you'll get what you can never find in a laboratory, even one run by a scientist of genius—living experience! Yes, living experience, and it's impossible to overestimate its importance for a scientist."

We talked for a good three hours, and what I heard that day from Nikolai Vasilyevich made me forget my doubts for a long time. They turned up again later, but this time life itself prompted the final decision.

## FAREWELL TO YOUTH

Doubts apart, however, the time had come for the goal towards which I had been working, namely graduation from the Institute. There would be the fifth year, then the State examination, and at those words I would go cold with fright and something would roll down from head to foot—my heart, apparently.

For the first half-year I still went to the department, principally to consult Petya Rubakin, to whom Nikolai Vasilyevich had entrusted the supervision of my first article. In the second half-year—I forgot completely that there existed in the wide world, the more so in Leningrad and in the yard of the First Medical Institute, a modest grey building in which a certain student had busied herself every day until very late at night with a mysterious streptococcus.

To be plain, I lost sleep and rest working on my article devoted to this streptococcus. I rewrote it at least four times. Then Olya Tropinina corrected the style and I rewrote it once more. One sentence in particular caused me a lot of headaches; it began with the words—"Popova proved. . . ."

What did these torments matter, however, compared with the terrible teasing which I had to put up with every day from Petya. Sometimes he would argue in public that I ought to be awarded the Nobel Prize at the very least for this article. Then he would say that my title, a very modest one, was not at all suitable and that the article ought to be called: "*On the unnatural conduct of a certain parasite.*" Again, he would request that I dedicate it to the memory of the outstanding Soviet microbiologist Pyotr Nikolayevich Rubakin, since he had devoted all his strength to this work and had passed away in horrible agony while reading the twelfth draft. Or else, on catching sight of me, he would exclaim, "Popova proved," and implore to be taken off to a lunatic asylum. In short, the help I received from him cost me dear, and the day when at last I sent the article to Nikolai Vasilyevich seemed to me a holiday, regardless of the fact that it was a disgusting, dreary day, packed full of "ear and throat" work.

Oh, those ear and throat problems! There was no getting away from them and everybody appreciated that when we went to work in the provinces we should all encounter these diseases first and foremost. But all the time I was studying ear and throat troubles I had a disagreeable feeling that I was bothering myself with something long, boring and monotonous, and that exactly nothing would happen if, the very next day after the exam, I were to forget all about these matters. And I did in fact forget them, though only because a new week began, and in one's fifth year that meant a new subject.

I was studying with Olya Tropinina, and once again I came to value her ability to grasp with ease what might be called "the general bird's-eye view" of a subject. She entered every new course as though it were a city, keeping before her mind's eye an imaginary map, and following the lines of the streets with its aid. She helped me a lot, and I think I helped her, too. She was impatient of details, and there were subjects which were nothing but lists of details, and extremely boring ones at that. She didn't like retracing her steps. This is an excellent trait, but it is well known that without going back to a page which one has already read it is very difficult, indeed almost impossible, to graduate from a medical institute. Also, when, at six in the morning, Olya would drop off to sleep in the middle of a sentence, I would shake her by the shoulder and scold her, though her thin, sweet face with its large, moist, closing eyes was pitiful to see.

* * *

It took me by surprise when suddenly, after a season spent entirely in cramming, night duties and hastily-carried-out practical work, a season divided not into days and nights but into children's diseases and infectious diseases, the spring shone through. One day, as I was leaving an exhausting spell of duty at the Emergency Medical Aid Institute, I glanced up at the sky and was convinced that the earth, strange as it may seem, was continuing its flight round the sun, paying no attention to the cares and anxieties of the young medical graduates. The sky was spring-like, with a delicate moon, hardly noticeable in its transparent azure, slowly sinking, and fluffy nocturnal clouds made a warm pink by the light of the sun, which itself, splendid, reddish-yellow and spring-like, too, was already rising somewhere far off and preparing to burst upon the city.

As unexpected as the spring was my discovery that nearly all my friends had got married. This "drive" had been started, to the general amazement, by quiet, reserved, silent Verochka Klimova, who married that young Army doctor who had taken me to the performances of the Moscow Art Theatre's touring company. It was I who had introduced them; not for nothing was the third toast at the wedding dinner, after those to the bride and bridegroom, to me. Then Masha Kolomeitseva got married, and this, too, surprised me—not, of course, the fact that she got married, but that, after having turned away a host of enviable suitors, she should have chosen an Egyptology student, a thin, tousled young man in dark glasses, always immersed in his books which, it seemed, interested him a great deal more than Masha did.

"I can't help it, girls," she declared decidedly, "I love him."

While we were preparing for the State examination I got an invitation to yet another wedding. This time it was not anybody at the Institute, but one of my Lopakhin friends, and I will tell about it later.

Andrei wrote to me very often now, and it was strange to think that I had been living till then without receiving these long, witty, affectionate letters. He wrote without troubling to select the main thing in his life: about the fishing collective farm, in the affairs of which he participated very ardently, about a conversation which he had had with the river-pilot (an interesting old man of eighty-five who lived in the settlement), about the new boat building (also by the fishery) on the Anzerka. Sometimes he would suddenly get the idea that what he wrote wouldn't interest me. But he was mistaken, and not only because his letters were lively and easy to read, and his even, unhurried, inquiring mind throbbed like a pulse in them, but also because I instinctively felt that he was not alone in his fight against Mitrofan Berezhnoi, who was for him the living embodiment of the old world. In several of his letters he wrote that he saw me beside him.

"Yesterday I came back from a visit to Arkhangelsk. I went to a concert while I was there, and heard Chaikovsky's Sixth Symphony. Do you know what happened in my heart under the impact of those golden sounds? I recalled our youth, and how full we were of splendid hopes. Do you remember our talk at the Pustynka after the school dance? We dreamt of doing something great for the good of the people and in their name. Where did that idea spring from? It has gone on echoing in my heart ever since, like a melody distant but distinct. Whence that light of truth and purity which lit up our school years? It came to us from the men who, for the first time in the history of mankind, would not agree to the ruling idea that 'man is a wolf to man.' 'How fortunate that you are not alone'—the music seemed to say to me, drawing tears of joy from the depths of my heart. 'How fortunate that your efforts will not drown in the ocean of efforts of other people, who are striving to change life and make it beautiful and happy!' Then I began to think about you, and I imagined you so vividly, listening attentively to me, and then you said one word that made all my clever thoughts fall head over heels in an instant."

It had always been hard for me to answer Andrei's letters, because the fact that he was much better educated than I stood out very clearly in them. But now I replied with ease, though I certainly couldn't think of keeping up with Andrei, who, sitting away out there in Anzersk Settlement, managed to follow not only scientific publications but also fiction, subscribed to periodicals and was *au fait* with everything that was happening in the country.

In May Lena Bystrova returned from attending the Eighth Congress of the Young Communist League—tired, matured, and in an indefinable way changed from what she had been before. Her first words were to say that she must prepare a report and disappeared for a few days, but then one evening she turned up, slammed shut under my very nose the textbook of forensic medicine which I was reading, and dragged me out into the street, which was already full of that vague play of light and shade with which a Leningrad white night always begins.

"Do you know, Tanya," she said suddenly, with agitation, "I was wrong when I advised you to decline taking up post-graduate work."

"Why?"

"Because you're gifted and probably could become a good scientist."

"And you think I can do scientific research?"

Lena did not reply. She was thinking. For some time we walked without speaking along University Embankment, which was deserted at this twilight hour. It was quiet; only the sound made by our heels on the pavement was to be heard, and from the Neva the puffing of a little tugboat towing a barge.

"Yes, everything depends on us," said Lena, "and now I can see that, in fact, we are still only beginning to learn. We want to be builders of a new life, and we shall be, because we believe in the triumph of communism and are ready to devote all our strength to it."

* * *

I find it hard to remember the few days which elapsed between sessionals and the State examinations, which began in June. The girls dragged me to Mozart's *Il Seraglio.* I went to sleep instantly, and opened my eyes only when the abduction had already been arranged. Later on, in the second act, I suddenly discovered a caramel in my cheek—I must have dozed off again. To make up for this, at the end of the third act I finally pulled myself together and demanded that the girls should tell me the story of the opera right from the beginning.

The next day Lyosha Dmitriyev, on meeting Olya and me in the Institute yard, declared that we had a "miserable, half-suffocated look," and argued that, in order to pass the State examinations, we needed to do three things: to walk, to walk and to walk. We got scared and went off to the Botanical Garden. What a funny walk that was! Olya breathed deeply all the time, and said, "Attention! Ventilation of the organism," while I imitated the actress Kolumbova, of the Moscow Variety Theatre. Later I wanted to sit down in an arbour on a hillock, from which there was a vista down a long path with a lovely tracery of parallel, slanting shadows, but Olya wouldn't hear of it, declaring that we must not sit down but "strive for healthy relaxation."

It was clear and cool in the Garden, a faintly bitter aroma was wafted from the little grey-green plants by the side of the hothouse, the delicate young shoots of the fir-trees were already dark and firm, a trustworthy sign that summer was well and truly with us. For three hours we roamed about the Garden, and at last fell asleep somewhere in the bushes, hungry, happy, drunk with air, greenery and unheard-of, long-forgotten, fantastic idleness.

* * *

It was in mid-June, the State exams had already begun; the three of us were studying—Olya, Lena Bystrova and I—and that happy day in the Botanical Garden long ago seemed half a dream to me. I remember we were devising a complicated plan that evening to prevent our group from going to Hyena Petrovna (that was the nickname of one Elena Petrovna M., a lecturer on children's diseases), when somebody knocked and rang and there on the threshold appeared Ninochka Bashmakova, smart, better looking than ever, somewhat embarrassed, and wearing a new hat with a veil.

The first idea that occurred to me, of course, was that somebody had proposed to her again, and she had come at once to consult me as to whether it was the real thing or not. This time, however, I hadn't the time to make any detailed study of the question, and so, sitting her down on the sofa right there in the hall (this happened at the Bystrovs' flat), I said determinedly:

"Well, get it off your chest. I'll give you ten minutes."

Nina laughed, blushed, threw back her veil and kissed me with a serious look (it was amazing!). Realizing that she had put some lipstick on my cheek, she took out her handkerchief and began to wipe it off. She only spread it further and said in a happy voice:

"Oof!"

We were all extremely irritable during the examinations, and I was perhaps more so than the others, so I, too, said, "Oof!" but with a different expression, one of impatient endurance.

"Well, tell me!"

"Oh, it's nothing special. Just that I'm being offered a job at the Mikhailovsky Theatre."

"Go on!"

This was marvellous news. She had only just graduated from the Conservatoire and she was being offered a job at a great theatre known throughout the land. I congratulated Nina with all my heart.

"Good girl! Do you remember Gury asking, 'Boys and girls, what if I'm a genius?' When's your début? I'll bring the whole Institute along. Will it be soon?"

"Wait a minute.... That's not all yet."

Nina blinked, then screwed up her eyes, and two tears, large, happy tears rolled from them.

"You know, he's very good," she said, wiping away her tears, "and he's even too clever for me. I'm not frightened that he's so clever, though, you know, for some reason I'm even frightened of you sometimes. And he loves me so much! All the other proposals somehow never moved me. But this time I felt I was in love, and I know for certain, I'm convinced that it's all the same to him that I'm pretty and that I sing, what's important is something quite different. I've been fond of him for a long time, last year even, but, you know, it never even occurred to me—first, because he was always buried in his music, that is, in himself, and second, because he's famous."

"Famous?"

"Rather! Do you know who it is? Victor Sergeyev."

"Oh—h—h."

I must admit that for the first minute or so I couldn't recall who Victor Sergeyev might be and why Nina should utter his name so proudly. But then a Philharmonic Society poster flashed before my mind's eye, and an article in the evening paper....

"Just a minute, isn't he from Moscow?"

"No, he's a Leningrad man. He's one of us, from the Conservatoire, a pupil of Shelepov's. He graduated long ago, back in 1923; they kept him on at the Conservatoire, understand?"

I embraced Nina.

"Now, when you're not asking me whether it's the real thing or not, I do believe, my dear, that it is the real thing."

I wanted to tell the other girls so that they might congratulate Nina, too, but she wouldn't let me. We chattered away until a very meaningful cough reached us from Lena's room. Nina began to hurry:

"Wait a minute; how are things going with you?"

"Not too badly; I'm getting by all right, so far. But, oh dear, the hardest thing is still to come—surgery!"

"And when did the appointments commission meet?"

"Yesterday."

"What came out of it?"

"I don't know yet."

"But you'll be staying in Leningrad?"

"Oh no! Nobody will propose that to me."

This was true. From the time that Nikolai Vasilyevich left, people in the department had stopped talking about his having proposed that I should stay on for post-graduate work.

"How's that?" Nina asked, with distress in her voice. "Don't they give you a choice?"

"Yes, they do. And I, as it happens, have asked to go to Lopakhin."

"Not really? That's wonderful. Then we'll see each other often."

"Steady on, they haven't given it to me yet!"

"Oh, you! Why, to you and me Lopakhin's a fascinating place, while to others it's a frightful dump. They'll let you have it!"

The meaningful cough was heard again and quickly I said good-bye to Nina. Once more I embraced her warmly. Once more I looked into her kind, tearful eyes, in which I read plainly that Nina with all her heart wanted everything to go as well with me as with her. Once again I wished her happiness. Then I accompanied her to the gate and the sweet, gentle vision in the hat with the veil disappeared round the corner, as though into the wings, while I returned to bowel disorders which, as is common knowledge, are a very serious danger to babies, especially in the summer-time.

* * *

One sultry July evening I left the Institute and turned not, as I usually did, to the right, towards the hostel, but to the left, it didn't matter where, towards the tram depot. The ceremonial meeting of the newly-graduated batch of young doctors had just ended, noble words of confidence and hope were still echoing in my head, the faces of my fellow-graduates, grown thinner but happy, still shone before my eyes. "It's a very odd thing, girls," Lena Bystrova had said, "but it seems that life can become even more interesting."

I made my way to an unfamiliar garden by the Neva, and some little girls, who till then had been assiduously playing hopscotch, stared at the queer lady who lay down on a bench and gazed as though bewitched at the splendid, still heat-hazed but cooling evening sky. Had my Institute years really gone, rushed by and ceased to sound? A tram rolled over Sampsonievsky Bridge, sounding its bell—straight towards me? The last green ray of sunset glided over the Neva—for me? A stout, important nurse, who looked as though she had stepped out of the pages of a children's book, came up with her knitting in her hands and asked if I felt faint. I gazed at her and tears of happy emotion filled my eyes. Could this kindness and courtesy and the knitting in her hands really be for me?

* * *

Youth seems endless and one wants to talk about it at length, in detail, lovingly. Why not tell, for instance, about the grand "Lopakhin" evening at Nina's, to which came Submarine-Commander Volodya Lukashevich and Gury, who was now working as a correspondent for the *Leningradskaya Pravda* and was going to Zaporozhye, where they were beginning to build the Dnieper dam? Why not tell how Gury delivered a rather long, but, on the whole, very good speech about how all of us, essentially speaking, were "journeying into the Five-Year Plan"? Why not tell how during that evening somebody mentioned Andrei, and it proved that each of us missed Andrei in his or her own way? Or how we all went out early in the morning into the street (Nina was now living in Chernyshov Lane) and made our way to the Neva, over which gulls were flying low, uttering guttural cries?

We walked on, holding hands, filling the whole pavement. Gury loudly recited Mayakovsky, "Hey, you Heaven! Take off your hat!" and the city was attractive, spacious, young and again somehow new in the soft tints of the waning white night.

But, enough! I still have a great deal to tell and perhaps those youthful years, so quickly passed, were only the prelude to events which make up the main content of my life.

# *Part Two*

# DOCTOR VLASENKOVA

## *Chapter I*

## ON THE STATE GRAIN FARM

### EVERYTHING NEW

Rain had fallen not long before, but the road was already dry, and the steppe sunshine was as scorching as ever. Everything around me was new. The road along which our car was hurtling had been dug up by the caterpillar tracks of tractors, and we overtook first one tractor, then another and then a whole train consisting of a tractor, a small carriage and a field kitchen. Steppe and more steppe, as far as the eye could see! It was drearily level on every side, except where occasionally a flat monument, some Scythian stone image on a burial mound, flashed by. It was so dusty there was sand even in the handkerchief I pulled out of my bag, just as though I had deliberately collected it and put it there. Rain began to fall again, and the sparse, heavy drops flung up dust in all directions like stones.

There were a lot of people travelling with me; women going to join their husbands on the State Farm, workers, tractor-drivers, mechanics. A clumsy man, stout and broad, with big ears and his cap pulled over his eyes, was bawling Svetlov's "Grenada," repeating the first lines over and over again with a slight pause between them:

*Farewell, my own people,*
*Farewell, my home!*
*Grenada, Grenada,*
*Grenada my own.*

He had been bawling "Grenada" all the way from Salsk for three or four hours already, so that now it began to seem to me that this simple melody entered imperceptibly into everything that I saw and heard. I made the singer's acquaintance. He was a mechanic of State Grain Farm No. 5. His name was Borodulin.

Sitting next to Borodulin was a tall man in check riding-breeches and canvas boots, his shirt open at the neck and revealing a powerful chest. Ironically, he denounced the director of the farm for his "dry law" (I had not realized that alcoholic drinks were forbidden at State Grain Farm No. 5).

"Lemonade and malt beer! What's your opinion of such medicines, doctor?"

Every one of the passengers in our car had his own concerns, but somehow it seemed as though they were of no importance in comparison with this man's, so loudly and confidently did he hold forth about them, so deafeningly did he laugh and with such a complacent expression did he look out on the road. His satisfaction was legitimate, however, for he had built the road. "Over half a mile every twenty-four hours. We worked at night, too, by the light of head-lamps. We were thanked twice in the People's Commissar's orders." This was engineer Repnin, chief of the road-building team. In his time he had been one of Budyonny's men, in fact he was one of those who

*—abandoned their huts*
*And went off to fight*
*That Grenada's land*
*Might belong to the peasants.*

"And did you know, doctor, that the First Mounted Army was born in the Salsk Steppe?"

Darkness began to descend; the driver put his lights on; some birds flashed by in the blue sky. I looked at my third companion. He was middle-aged, he had a trunk with him, and he wore a suit which, though oldish, was neat. He was named Maslov, and like Repnin he was an engineer; he was on his way from Moscow to the State Grain Farm. His outward appearance was commonplace—not very big features, a small nose, flat lips. He smoked and kept himself to himself. Only when a heated discussion broke out as to whether cotton could be sown in these parts did he lift his eyes—the cold eyes of a man who never raises his voice.

Lights appeared in the distance, and from the regular way they were laid out I guessed that they must be lighted windows. Now the houses themselves came into view, looking strange on the level and empty surface of the steppe. The houses were three-storeyed, and there were not many of them; perhaps six or seven. We had arrived. This was the Central Hamlet of State Grain Farm No. 5. The watchman took my trunk and led me to the hostel. In reply to my questions he mumbled that the chiefs were away, no tea was available, and I should be lucky if I found a bed. We went into an uncompleted house, and by the light of his torch the watchman found me a vacant bed. I washed and went to bed. The noise of something pouring and smashing and a light suddenly glaring into the windows would not allow me to sleep. This must be the night shift starting work. I must sleep!

...Two months later. Late autumn. In an empty apartment in a new, still uninhabited house, in a little room which the inhabitants of Central Hamlet all called "the surgery," I was sitting writing a letter in which I gave an account of my work and my cares, without exaggerating anything. "Almost every day I recall our conversation, dear Nikolai Vasilyevich; you remember, the one when you said that scientific research could and should be done in country places...."

The light sometimes flared up, sometimes went out, or almost out, so that only the thin tracery of the reddish, dying filament could be seen. Was I really in the country? Three-storeyed houses were standing in the midst of an unbounded steppe. That morning I had seen a tall, ungainly gardener knocking in pegs on the square in front of the administrative building, and losing his temper when tractors drove across his future garden. A long row of houses traversed the whole length of Central Hamlet; this was Commune Avenue, the future main street of State Grain Farm No. 5. And out there in the fields, field-kitchens were smoking, tents wavered in the autumn wind, and in green carriages tractor-drivers and combine-operators were snatching a brief, anxious sleep.

No, I was not in the country; nor in the town either. Perhaps Nikolai Vasilyevich was right and in these new, hitherto unknown ways of life there were hidden new, hitherto unknown possibilities for scientific work? But how was I to get to grips with this work? From what angle should I approach it?

The unfinished letter lay still on the table in the empty house, which smelt of whitewash.

My neighbour went out into the kitchen and washed, then went on to the stairway landing to shake and brush his overcoat, doing all this in a precise and unhurried way. When I first saw Engineer Maslov, on the journey to the State Grain Farm, it never entered my head that he would be sharing the same apartment with me.

"Doctor, are you at home? Please let me in."

I opened the door. A girl I didn't know, barefoot, with a kerchief round her shoulders, stood in the dark entrance. Her legs were bedaubed with mud up to the knees.

"What's the matter?"

"Little sister is dying."

"Whose sister?"

"Mine."

The girl was crying.

"Where is she?"

"In the engineers' canteen. She fell off the scaffolding. You'll come, won't you, doctor?"

"Yes, of course."

"I'll run on; all right?"

Carrying an attaché-case which held nearly all the medicine I possessed, I went out into the avenue, then stopped short, because I had to cross this avenue in order to reach the canteen and this couldn't be done. It was covered with mud—thick, black, gleaming mud. I had coped with mud in my time, especially as a child back in Lopakhin. But how could the good-natured Lopakhin slush be compared with this thick, oily mud which stuck to one's legs? I took one step and my legs slowly went in, but, by good fortune, only up to the ankle. I must have happened on the crossing made of planks which was laid down somewhere about here. It would not be so good, though, if this were only the board which a driver had put under the wheel of his car the previous day when it got stuck in the mud outside my "surgery." Another step—yes, it was that board all right! I went in up to my knees, and only with difficulty was I able to get back to the position from which I had started. What was I to do?

Meanwhile, somebody big was advancing towards me through the darkness, puffing noisily as he strode rapidly along. It was engineer Repnin. He was wearing overalls, with rubber boots that came above his knees, and a broad-brimmed hat. A string passing round the back of his neck was tied to the tabs of his boots.

"Is that you, doctor?"

"Yes."

"Are you stuck?"

"Yes, I'm in a bad way."

"Young women ought to sleep at nights, that's why."

"That's enough of your nonsense. It would be more use if you'd help me."

With a guffaw he took one huge stride forward and before I could realize what was happening he had lifted me up, carried me across the street and carefully stood me down on the ground.

"Thank you, Comrade Repnin."

"Seriously though, doctor, where are you off to?"

"What about you? Are you going home?"

"Yes."

"Be kind and wake up the feldsher and tell him I'm waiting for him."

My feldsher, Leonty Kuzmich, lived near Repnin.

"Where?"

"At the engineers' canteen."

"At the canteen? What's happened there?"

"I don't know yet."

I was already a long way from him as I spoke. There was a footway along the far side and within a few minutes the tear-stained girl whom I'd seen already met me on the threshold of the canteen.

Deep in thought, although there was no time for thinking, I stood over her sister, who lay unconscious with open eyes from which the last glimmer of life seemed to have departed.

She was a concrete-mixer and had fallen off some scaffolding on to a heap of sand. She had a small bruise on the breast but there were neither dislocations nor fractures. Why was her pulse scarcely beating? Why was her breathing so uneven and broken? Why (I anxiously looked into her face) had her nose become pointed and cyanosis already touched her lips?

A page from a synopsis on surgery rose before my mind's eye. I saw it as clearly as I saw this girl, who was dying and would, undoubtedly and without fail, die within five to ten minutes.

"In cases where surgical first aid is required the question which presents itself to the doctor first is 'What must be done?' and then comes 'How am I to do it?'" But what was to be done if the doctor was seeing the patient for the first time as her pulse was dying away and as her eyes were beginning to grow dim and roll up under her eyelids? What was to be done when there wasn't a moment to spare even for the most hurried of examinations? I injected camphor—

no change whatsoever. What about artificial respiration? But do they use artificial respiration in such cases?

An idea which seemed very strange indeed darted through my mind in this setting of a half-lit kitchen crammed with tables on which stood piles of greasy plates. It was not even an idea, but just a sudden momentary recollection of the single instance when with my own eyes I had seen the famous Dzhanelidze revive, with an injection in the heart, a patient who was dying on the operating-table. First of all, though, he had adrenalin, and then, secondly, he had practically no doubt at all where he had to make the injection. Was it between the fifth and sixth ribs or between the fourth and fifth?

"Take off her overalls! Quickly! And open the window!"

Carefully I lifted her obedient arms. Then again—just as carefully. Another ten, twenty, thirty times. Another hundred, two hundred, three hundred. . . .

The cook, trying not to make any noise, put more firewood under the cooking-stove and moved the saucepans around. The waitresses came and went, on tiptoe—time wouldn't wait, they had to feed the incoming shift. Somebody charged into the canteen with a crash; they stopped him—"Sh-sh! Quiet!"

And quiet fell in the canteen. They talked in whispers, not moving the chairs, not rattling the crockery. They all knew that two paces away, on the other side of the wall, work was going on; measured, wearisome, monotonous work. . . .

One, two! The half-closed eyelids were blue like a dead person's. One—two! There was no hope. The sweat was pouring off me. I flung everything off except a light jacket. One—two! How strange, the whites of her eyes had rolled up in different ways. One—two! I couldn't manage any more. Another twenty and then. . . . Well, now another twenty.

Women crowded round me. Did this mean that the shift had gone? The cook was washing the stove. Oh, how my back hurt! To hell with my back. One—two!

"She's dead."

"God rest her soul."

"Peace be with her."

The women wept. One—two. It can't be helped. Better give up. Another twenty—and then. . . . Well, now another twenty. The lids quivered. Nonsense, I imagined it. No, they did quiver. One—two!. . . Now's the time to apply oneself seriously to work.

"There, that's fine. More light! Water!"

Within an hour I went back home. It was just as dark in the street, or even darker. The gleam of the mud in the darkness was just as sinister. It was cold and windy. The girls from the canteen, having quickly given out the remaining barley porridge to the night-shift, accompanied me. They asked me if it was hard learning to be a doctor, and was the same expected at the Institute from men and women alike. I replied to them gravely and without haste, and as I listened to myself I thought, "What was it—shock? Oh, how little I know yet!"

Out of the darkness loomed a stooping, clumsy figure in a long overcoat. It was Leonty Kuzmich, the feldsher whom I had asked Repnin to rouse for me.

"Is that you, Tatyana Petrovna? What's happened?"

That very morning I had had a quarrel with him for countermanding an order of mine. A child had been brought in suffering from burns, and I had ordered that the surface of the burns be smeared with tannic acid, which was something new. I had moaned about Leonty Kuzmich, his slovenliness, laziness and stupidity, in every letter that I had written to Nikolai Vasilyevich Zaozersky. Why was it that now he seemed to me so kindly, funny and likable?

"Everything's all right, dear Leonty Kuzmich. But you're late."

"I'm late?"

Cupping his ear with his hand (he was hard of hearing) he drew nearer to me and suddenly, as he made a desperate movement with his whole body, he slipped and fell in the mud. The girls laughed and helped him to get up.

We had arrived at the "surgery."

"Good night!"

"Good night, doctor, and thank you!"

"Thank you very much!"

"For what?"

"For Lusha."

"Doctor, she will live, won't she?"

"Certainly she will."

"Well, thanks again, doctor, thank you very much."

As was usual after two o'clock in the morning, no lights twinkled or came on. Once more I was alone.

In the deserted kitchen I washed myself, hard, without stinting water, and I went back to my room with my cheeks aflame from the cold water. The unfinished letter lay on the table. "Almost every day I recall our conversation, dear Nikolai Vasilyevich. . . ." Yes, indeed! I would finish the letter tomorrow; I must sleep now.

And I lay down on the cold, damp bed and pulled the blanket over my head. Sleep came at once, but even as I slept I felt that something good had happened. Something very good, but what it was I couldn't guess.

Three months passed. Spring had begun.

. . . I had already had my interview, a very brief one, but I did not go away, and the director, a little man with red hair, was annoyed because I was still there. All right, let him be annoyed. I waited patiently while he talked with an engineer specializing in repairs to combines, then with a girl tractor-driver who complained that her husband had left her, then with a mechanic who was off to Salsk to fetch some lorries, then with Repnin who darkly informed the director that the Petroleum Syndicate had again failed to send the lubricating oil—let them prosecute him, he'd give it hot to the person who deserved it. After that the director, trying not to look in my direction, received somebody from the I.M.R.—apparently there is an Institute of Management-Rationalization. Then Chilimov, the Secretary of the Party Committee, arrived, and it became still harder for the director to maintain his air of ignoring my presence in his office. A spontaneous gesture of annoyance escaped from him when Chilimov said, with a laugh, that he had "no secrets from Tatyana Petrovna." So much the better. I listened with interest to a long discussion about the achievements and shortcomings of the "camp system," under which people went into the fields for the entire period of field work, moving on from one cultivated section to another. Chilimov was in favour of a different method—tractor columns. All right then; but you still can't get by without a hospital!

I was extremely hungry, as I had risen at the crack of dawn. I very much wanted to get up and go, and the nearer evening came the more tempting this solution of my problem appeared to me. But if I were to go away the sick would lie, as before, in tents in a temperature of 26°F at night and 46°F during the day. There had been an icy hurricane in April of the previous year; the drivers had to hide under snow-drifts, and the tractors froze in the steppe. Could Comrade Muravyov (that was the director's name) guarantee that that calamity, which people were still talking about, would not be repeated this spring?

The conversation about the advantages of tractor columns over the "camp system" went on for over an hour, and then for twenty minutes the director signed papers, with an assumed expression of indifference on his face. At last he raised his eyes, which were kind but with a shade of irony in them. A day or two before I had applied my stethoscope to his chest; he had a sick heart. I had prescribed theobromine and adonis, one table-spoonful three times a day, not less than eight hours' sleep, a strict schedule, and so forth. There was no sign that day that he had followed at least one of my treatments! A strict schedule! He had good reason to burst out into a hearty laugh when I thickly underlined those words in my prescription.

"Well, Tatyana Petrovna? Aren't we going a little too far, eh?"

The director had a soft, unhurried way of uttering each word. I liked him, though I didn't myself know why. Perhaps it was because he was so little like a director of a State Grain Farm where the extent of the arable land was as great as in some countries of Western Europe.

"It's a matter of who will conquer whom, just as in the struggle between co-operation and private capital."

"I don't see the resemblance."

With his right hand Ivan Ivanovich, as the director was called, vigorously rubbed his left. Was it from illness, or just from habit?

"All right, Tatyana Petrovna. Let's square our accounts, so to speak. Haven't I done everything for you that you asked me to do? Weren't the surgical instruments ordered?"

"Yes."

"Haven't curative sera been ordered, in accordance with your list and in quantity very much greater than the demand?"

"Yes, in the quantity needed."

"Didn't I order a pictorial exhibition on the care of mother and child, which is a laughing-stock for the whole farm?"

"Yes; they laugh because there are so few children here at present, but there will be plenty."

"Last week you asked me to get you some piece of apparatus which, it turned out, couldn't be used without a microscope. I ordered it, didn't I?"

"Yes, you did. We have a microscope, Ivan Ivanich. But do you know that surgical, therapeutic and dental departments have been functioning at Gigant State Farm since February? They have a wonderful pharmacy with a complete set of drugs, and they're putting up a special building for their hospital."

"But that's why it's been called Gigant, Tatyana Petrovna. Yes, indeed. And now you come to me again and ask, insist, that I take away engineer Maslov's room on the grounds that you need it in order to set up a hospital, which to the best of my knowledge nobody has asked you to set up."

"Ivan Ivanich, it won't do Maslov any harm to pass the summer out at one of the sections. Give him a room at Dry Beam. After all, he won't be supervising the work of the combines from Central Hamlet!"

"It's no business of yours, Tatyana Petrovna, to decide where it's most convenient for him to supervise the work of the combines from. And I ask you. . . ."

"Ivan Ivanich, remember the spring of last year. I have twelve people sick, four of them seriously. I'm responsible for them. Now then, you're a clever man, tell me what I'm to do with them."

Muravyov rose and slowly went over to the window. I had noticed long since that he had grown pale, but now he seemed to have gone paler than ever. He opened the window. Why? The wind burst into the room, fluttering papers from the table to the floor. He did not pick them up. Smiling in an embarrassed way he put two chairs together while I stared at him with horror. Breathing heavily he added a third chair. He put his hand to his brow as though trying to remember something, then, sighing faintly, he sat or rather lay down on the chairs.

"Ivan Ivanich, what's the matter with you?"

The director was hardly breathing.

"Oh, my God, what have I done? I've worn you out?"

He lay silent for a long time, for twenty minutes, while I applied a wet towel to his heart, found the bottle containing my mixture in his desk, scolded him for not having so much as opened it and myself for having brought on this attack.

"What a stupid creature I am! You ought to have just driven me out."

Gradually his pallor passed and his face livened up. The director wanted to stand up, but I wouldn't let him.

"Oh, well, all right, Tatyana Petrovna, I surrender. I give in. You shall have your hospital. Yes, you shall have it."

This happened at the end of my year's work, which I started slowly, with effort and difficulty. I've described it cursorily, in disconnected episodes which do not even make clear how much time I had to spend, for instance, on concerns which had no direct connection at all with my medical work.

The District Executive Committee entrusted our medical centre with the task of organizing a crèche in the neighbouring collective farm. This was an important political task in those days, and Katya, the nurse, and I took a lot of trouble over rearranging and adapting the "stock of soft and hard supplies" which had been sent from the District Health Office at Salsk. But the supplies were only half the job. I had also to train two Komsomol girls from the collective farm who had undertaken to work in the crèche.

I had been left on my own at the medical centre since May, with no feldsher to help me. He had resigned and had gone away, and I was glad about that, because he'd made trouble between the patients and me, and when drunk had shouted out that he wouldn't let himself be ordered around by a miserable girl. The personnel who remained were good, but the nurses had quietly got married and were leaving for the Far East. It was a coincidence, of course, but two nurses, one after the other, had gone off to the Far East.

... The mechanic was taken ill on the evening of 11th of June, and though I managed to get out to Tsygansky section in a car which was going that way, when I arrived he had nearly "handed in his checks," as the worried cook told me. When I went in I found him lying down in the room occupied by the experimental and testing department, and swearing. His likable face, with the big ears which made him look like an elephant, had become paler and softer. Every five minutes he would cry out to the cook in a fierce voice, "Masha, go away!" and get out of bed, clutching his stomach, always for one and the same very serious purpose.

When I examined him I was disturbed to find his skin so cold. Many patients with stomach ailments are like that, but his skin was exceptionally cold and damp, like a frog's. His pupils were enlarged, his pulse was slow and he said that he had "shooting pains" in his calves. I took his temperature—it was 96.3.

This bore a general resemblance to some sort of food poisoning—sausage poisoning, for instance, concerning which the only thing that I could remember was that it differed from mushroom poisoning in some way. The correctness of my diagnosis was confirmed by the fact that Borodulin had seen his niece off the night before he fell ill, and both mushrooms and sausage had been served at the farewell party. So it seemed that there could be no doubt as to how the illness had been caused.

Night had already fallen when, having waited for a passing car, I brought the mechanic to Central Hamlet and placed him in my "ward" (there was still no hospital), which consisted of two tents, each holding eleven persons. Fortunately there were not many patients, only three, in fact, in the tent where I fixed Borodulin up.

As before, he moaned and groaned, complained that he was cold and from time to time shouted at the nurse in his fierce voice, "Go away, Katya."

Nevertheless his general condition became easier. His temperature went up to normal and his pale, kindly face brightened up. He was already worrying about how they'd be getting on with the repairs in his absence, was abusing somebody called Besshtanko, who, he said, was an "expert in delays," and had succeeded in informing the nurse that he was "all alone in life." These were all obvious signs of recovery, and on returning to my room I even wondered whether it was worth while making an analysis. I had no incubator as yet, and the little pantry which I had adapted to serve as an incubator had to be warmed with an oil-stove for at least three hours in order to raise its temperature to 96.8° or 98.6°F. And even then, raising the temperature was only half the job. It had to be kept at that level all the time until the microbes had grown, a wearisome job after a day full of anxieties and worries and two journeys—there and back—to distant Tsygansky section. But I made the culture all the same and throughout the night kept sleepily looking into the pantry, cursing the oil-stove, which for one reason or another began to smoke. Ten hours passed; that was enough for the first colonies of microbes to appear in the nutrient medium....

The dominant feeling with which I looked at the delicate film which appeared on one of the peptone water cultures was curiosity, especially as the mechanic (so Katya told me when she looked in for a second) was feeling a great deal better. I smeared some of the film on a slide, slipped it under the microscope, and in the object glass I saw, as distinct as the black lines which at this moment run across the white sheet of paper before my eyes, the short, "comma-like" vibrios of cholera....

I could not believe my eyes, and did not believe them. I turned away from the microscope and looked around me with astonishment. Everything was in its place, the two shelves containing books and lab crockery, the medicine cabinet, the bed, covered with a sheet, on which I examined patients. Everything as before, nothing changed. Yet under the microscope, if I could believe my eyes, were typical cholera "commas."

With a hand that trembled slightly I changed the preparation. It was the same as before. I changed it again.... The "surgery" was warm, even stuffy, but a sudden cold chilled me from head to foot and even my teeth chattered. What had I done?

"What have I done?" I repeated aloud, clutching my head.

I had brought the mechanic to Central Hamlet in a passenger car. Some women had sat near him on the journey;

it had been dark and I didn't remember how they were dressed or what their faces looked like. I hadn't asked what his niece's name was, where she'd gone or who had attended her farewell party. I hadn't even asked, when I ought to have sent a telegram asking that they take her off the train and send her to an isolation hospital. Everybody who had been in contact with the patient, and, above all, the patient himself, should have been sent to an isolation hospital (which didn't exist on our farm, by the way), but I had calmly placed him in the same tent with a couple of asthma cases and a boy who'd broken his collar-bone! I'd done nothing to prevent the spread of a frightful disease which had been wiped out long before in the Soviet Union. On the contrary, everything that I had done was filled, as though deliberately, with such crude, criminal mistakes as though I had been consciously and single-mindedly striving to transform a single case of cholera into an epidemic.

... Making an effort to master the tremor which from time to time ran down my back I went at once to see the director and told him of the state of affairs. This time our interview lasted twenty minutes, and within another twenty minutes a car was rushing out to Tsygansky section carrying lysol, carbolic and so forth, and tents had been pitched three-quarters of a mile from Central Hamlet, to provide isolation for thirty-six persons. Some instructions for combating cholera, which until then had been lying, folded in four, in the previous year's *Calendar for Doctors*, suddenly sprang to life and became the main object of my thoughts....

The mechanic was sitting up in bed wearing a skiing helmet tied under his chin and telling the boy with the broken collar-bone the story of the film *Kastus Kalinovsky*. A cat lay asleep across his knees, a point which I remember because after some hesitation I decided to send this cat to the isolation tents as well.

I gave the mechanic a very close examination but found nothing. True, he still had to leave the tent from time to time, but much less often than the previous day. His temperature was normal. He had overnight "consumed in their entirety" the medicines which I had prescribed for him, as he told me with a cheery smile. Besshtanko, the patient maintained, had already flogged to death the new tractor which had been sent not long previously to Tsygansky section, and it was best to send some spare parts at once from Central Hamlet. A certain tractor-driver who had had a similar trouble with his stomach had drunk half a pint of vodka, taken a snack of herring, and recovered: was it true, doctor, that modern medicine was in favour of drastic methods in certain cases? When could he get back to work? It would be fine if he could go back tomorrow. The day after tomorrow was Besshtanko's day off and he, Borodulin, must without fail catch him holding up the work. "You don't know what that man's like, doctor! Cunning as a fly, he is." His niece, he hoped, had already reached Rostov—a fine girl, by the way, a dental technician, an orphan and very fond of books and plays. . . .

He was almost well again, but what did that matter in comparison with the fearsome picture revealed on the object glass under my microscope?

Very cautiously I suggested that he move to another tent. It would be more convenient there, the tent was small and he would have a nurse all to himself. He was almost well, but I wanted to follow up his case, as a laboratory analysis showed that he had a very rare disease, quite without danger to life, but of great interest from the scientific standpoint.

What other lies I told him I don't remember, but he suddenly drooped, went pale, lay down in bed and, after a silence, said plaintively that he felt, himself, that his illness was still far from over.

* * *

At four o'clock the head of the Salsk District Public Health Department arrived at State Grain Farm No. 5 with a whole staff of medical orderlies and nurses, and politely but firmly informed me that he would himself take over entire charge of the organizational side of the matter. He was an old doctor who had served for many years in the Navy and settled at Salsk in his old age, his family having come from those parts. He looked like a sailor, too, not like a present-day one but like one out of an adventure story: short, red-faced, grey-haired, talking in a deep, hoarse voice and never removing a short, black pipe from his mouth. His orders, too, by their brevity and decisiveness, recalled those of a naval officer. Later, when we had got to know each other better, I told him that I was always fancying that he was about to say, "Pipe all hands on deck," and then everybody would climb on deck and do something nautical. He laughed, made a fierce face and wheezed:

"And they'd climb!"

He was sitting at a table in the director's office and I was standing at attention in front of him reporting more or less coherently, though my voice broke disagreeably, two or three times. By then I had already obtained the results from culturing on solid nutrient medium—the same, alas, as before. Communications on the progress of work are given, as a rule, in accordance with a formula, and my first preliminary report was: "the vibrio having been detected, the investigation continues."

I could give him a second report only after I had carried out a so-called "agglutination reaction," as a result of which the vibrios ought to be stuck together in white flakes. But I had no sera. According to the regulations our medical centre should have possessed a full set of sera; I had spoken about this to Ivan Ivanovich Muravyov a thousand times and written to Salsk about it as well. Nothing had been sent us, however, and now, profiting by the opportunity, I mentioned the matter to the head of the District Public Health Department. He murmured:

"We've brought sera."

"In that case," I said, "you shall have my second preliminary report tonight."

On the whole, from the moment Dr. Drozdov, the head of the District Public Health Department, arrived at the farm and the echoes of his deafening naval commands began to reach my ears, the anti-epidemic side of the matter ceased to worry me.

These echoes were sometimes a little strange. Every two or three hours, for example, Katya, who was a very good-natured girl, exceptionally fond of a joke, would come running to me with the latest communiqué:

"She's passed through Kushchevka. Kind regards."

Or, two or three hours later:

"She's passed through Bataisk. Best wishes."

She passed through these and many other stations on the North-Caucasus Railway, did Borodulin's niece, dental technician and lover of books and plays, whom it seemed impossible to catch, in spite of Dr. Drozdov's vigorous telegrams. At last she was caught when she had already reached Rostov, and, though in perfectly good health, she was sent to isolation hospital for six days.

Completely healthy also were the twenty-seven persons who had seen the film *Kastus Kalinovsky* along with Borodulin the evening before he was taken ill at Tsygansky section. Completely healthy so far were the cook who had been looking after him, and also the asthmatics and the boy with the broken collar-bone who had spent ten and a half hours in the same tent with him. The women who had sat next to him that evening in the car, and whom I'd had great difficulty in tracing, were in good health. As for Borodulin himself, he, too, felt fine, though as soon as I entered his tent he would begin to groan and assume a depressed, anxious look, as became a patient who was the object of scientific observation.

But if nobody was ill and if this wasn't cholera, what the devil had occurred in my incubator? From where had the characteristic transparent colonies of the cholera vibrio appeared, first in the liquid and then in the solid nutrient medium?

I have mentioned what had to be carried out in order to test this fact: an agglutination reaction. I carried out this reaction, observing all the rules, and nothing happened. However much I searched for whitish flakes on the object glass, there was nothing to be seen; the picture remained exactly the same as before.

Agitated and perplexed, I rushed to the isolation tents, found Dr. Drozdov and told him frankly that nothing had come out. He muttered:

"Don't worry, little doctor, everything will be all right."

"What shall I do?" I asked.

"Carry on in the same spirit, my dear; especially because I think you cherish a secret inclination towards this business."

Short, red-faced, grey-haired, he strutted about among the isolation tents (a number of tents stood at an equal distance from each other in the field) and puffed away at his pipe with a kindly expression on his face. Inside the tents sat bored, perfectly healthy combine-operators, tractor drivers, the film operator, some old women, and, amongst others, that "expert in delays" Besshtanko, who, it turned out, had succeeded in settling himself comfortably in the room of the experimental section after I had removed Borodulin from it. The only one there, it seemed, who wasn't bored and wasn't cursing the poor mechanic was the cat.

I had no confidence that Dr. Drozdov knew more than I did about the complex question of the nature of the cholera vibrio. In reply to my questions his only answer was that he had already applied for an epidemiologist to be sent from Rostov, and was expecting him to arrive at any moment. So I returned to my room and, after thinking awhile, again applied myself to work.

One thing alone was clear in all this, that I must now carry out the same reaction using a pure culture.

"And to do that," said I to myself aloud, "the first thing is to obtain this pure culture."

Well, then. That wasn't difficult. I separated off a few colonies which were suspicious by their transparency and placed each of them in a separate test-tube with an agar slope of the same solid nutrient medium which I've mentioned already. Then I trimmed the wicks of the oil-stove (which, of course, bore no direct relation to the obtaining of a pure culture) and placed a tripod with the test-tubes in the "incubator" pantry.

This was at five in the evening; I'd gone to visit the asthma cases, and as I left, I remember, I had looked at the alarm-clock. The asthma cases kept me for a long time—as soon as an attack would seize one of them, the other would have one, too. After dealing with them I went on to the canteen and on the way met Repnin, who was just returning from a business trip. He lighted a lantern in order to look at me, and was displeased.

"There was once a beautiful girl," he said sadly. "Doctor, is it really that lump of a Borodulin who's got you down like this? You don't need cholera to kill him, I'll do that myself."

He sighed, scolded me, laughed and out of the fullness of his heart kissed my hand, evidently regarding me as the sufferer rather than "that lump of a Borodulin." We went into the canteen together, had supper and talked about something or other, but I had left my heart back there in the little, close pantry, where the tripod with the test-tubes stood on a hanging shelf which I'd made out of a piece of plywood.

Repnin took me home and wanted to come in—"on my word of honour, I've never seen vibrios in my life"—but I wouldn't let him. We said good-bye on the stairs, and just then the light began to go out, as often happened at our place at midnight.

In complete darkness I climbed upstairs to my room and by sense of touch alone opened the "surgery," which lately

I'd been keeping locked—I myself didn't know why. As my eyes got accustomed to the darkness I confidently opened the door of my "incubator."

I saw it at once, perhaps because the oil-stove had gone out and it was completely dark in the "incubator." The test-tubes were glowing, each of them separately, and not with a diffused light but with a definite, bluish light like that of the moon.

## THE INVESTIGATION CONTINUES

Of course, I might have been dreaming. From the moment when Repnin and I said good-bye to each other on the stairs and the lamp started to dim, everything had been a little like a dream. I turned round, thinking that perhaps the moon's reflection had fallen on the test-tubes. But no, the window was covered with a blind, the night was moonless, and no matter how many times, playing a game with myself, I closed the door of the "incubator" in order suddenly to open it again after the lapse of a minute, the test-tubes still glowed and even more strongly than before, it seemed. A blue cap of radiance rose delicately above them.

With trembling hands I placed the tripod in a pan, which I used for preparing nutrient media in, and cautiously descended the stairs.... Cholera vibrios don't glow. These vibrios weren't those of cholera, then? I stopped for an instant in the dark hallway and again looked at the tripod. They were still glowing! Would they go out before I reached Drozdov's place?

Engineer Maslov, my neighbour, met me in Commune Avenue and I passed him at a distance, as though this silent, reserved man had it in his power to do something which might cause my fantastic test-tubes to stop glowing. The shortest way to the isolation tents lay across a field, and though I always hated walking through dark, rustling wheat, nevertheless I went straight across. The tents showed vaguely white through the darkness sooner than I had expected.

Holding the pan straight in front of me, I flew into the little house made of planks around which the isolation tents were laid out. This was where Drozdov and his staff from Salsk were living.

"Where's Ivan Afanasyevich?"

"In his own room," replied an elderly nurse whom I didn't know, tearing herself away from a book which she was short-sightedly holding right in front of her eyes, and looking at me with surprise.

"Take me to him. It's urgent."

Drozdov had a separate room, a little larger than my "incubator." He was fast asleep when we went in. The nurse wanted to light the petrol-lamp but I cried out angrily, "No, don't!"

"What's up, little doctor?" Drozdov asked in his hoarse voice, without rising.

"Ivan Afanasyevich, please excuse me for waking you. But it's this. . . ."

And I carefully lifted the tripod out of the pan and placed it on the table beside his bed.

"What does this mean?"

"I don't know."

"What do you mean, you don't know?"

"It's very simple; I've no idea," I replied, trying to restrain a foolish impulse to laugh. "I needed to isolate a pure culture, I cultured it on an agar slope, and there it is. . . ."

Drozdov jumped up. He took the table with the test-tubes on it into the middle of the room, grunted, and quickly ran round the table. He lit the lamp—the test-tubes went out. He blew the lamp out—the test-tubes glowed again.

"Y-y-yes," he stammered with childlike amazement. "Well, now! Congratulations. It's obvious you've made a big discovery."

* * *

Next day Dr. Rovinsky, the epidemiologist from the Rostov Regional Public Health Department, arrived at the farm and spent a long time examining my test-tubes.

"I'll have to disappoint you, doctor," said this tall, grey, sad-looking man in pince-nez, who shrugged his shoulders vaguely before answering any question and who knew cholera about a hundred times better than I did. "Luminous vibrios have long been known to science. But you are the first to have succeeded in obtaining them from the human organism. That is, apparently, something new. So now you'll have your very own vibrio. What's your name?"

"Vlasenkova."

"Well, there you are. *Vibrio Vlasencovi.* No, it would be better like this: *Vibrio phosphorescens Vlasencovi.* That's something, after all. Not every doctor can boast of being the author of a vibrio. But there's no cholera here; so that why I was brought in is a mystery."

It wasn't cholera and Borodulin wasn't suffering from cholera, that was the unexpected but fully justified conclusion drawn by the epidemiologist from Rostov. His visit was far from fruitless, however. He had a look at Tsygansky section and two or three more sections, and advised me to take a number of sanitary measures which, though simple, were very effective. I was convinced of this sooner than I had expected to be.

He gave his report at a conference which Drózdov called at midday, and from this magnificent epidemiological report there emerged (amongst other things) the fact that the mechanic had really been poisoned by mushrooms which he had eaten, so that the luminous vibrios had not the slightest connection with his illness. This did not at all mean, however, that the laboratory should suspend work on these vibrios; on the contrary, the investigation must be continued. In the same way, the fact that the case which had caused alarm had not turned out to be a case of cholera did not justify the assumption that there were no factors in the life of the farm giving rise to stomach troubles.

Drozdov called on me to speak and I replied that I was deeply grateful for the advice.

"This advice is especially valuable for us," I said, "because factors giving rise to bowel disorders are evidently not completely eliminated even in Rostov. It was in that city that the last case of cholera in the U.S.S.R. was recorded."

Drozdov opened his eyes wide but everybody laughed, Dr. Rovinsky loudest of all.

In saying good-bye to him I asked whether he thought that it was worth analyzing the luminous vibrios from the biochemical standpoint. He shrugged his shoulders vaguely, and then read me a whole lecture on the luminosity of beetles and of rotten wood. He had not the slightest idea what caused luminosity in bacteria.

Soon I took leave of Dr. Drozdov, who closed his isolation hospital within a couple of hours of receiving the third report, which was negative, of course. As I said good-bye I asked permission to kiss him. We embraced and, touched, he said:

"Dear little doctor, I'm fond of you. I wish I had a daughter like you."

* * *

The anti-epidemic detachment from Salsk had departed, seasonal workers were living in the little house knocked together out of packing-cases, the great crested hen was wandering with its chicks in the place where bored combine-operators and drivers had sat in isolation. At Tsygansky section Borodulin had long since returned to battle against "experts in delay." Wheat was ripening on the fifty thousand acres of State Grain Farm No. 5 and everybody, big and small, thought, spoke and worried about nothing but the harvest.

The collective farmers who came in to draw up an agreement with our farm for the harvesting of their own crops thought and talked about our harvest. I happened to be present at the drawing-up of one of these agreements, and was struck by the tense, almost inspired attention with which the peasants asked if it were true that the State Farm hoped to get a yield of five-and-a-half to six-and-a-half hundredweight per acre? (this was a big achievement at that time). The students who came from Rostov to help the State Farm assemble its combines thought and spoke about the harvest. Tapping wrenches in the palms of their hands with a masterful air, they strode among the opened crates, from which more and more new machine-parts appeared amid shavings and greased paper. The smiths, too, were thinking and talking about the harvest as they worked at their flaming furnaces. People were talking about the harvest in the workshops, in the fields, in near sections and in distant ones where they were opening new land for winter wheat.

...From time to time Repnin would put in an appearance, perspiring but dandified, under the awning in Commune Avenue, and everybody hung upon his words as, negligently holding by one finger his brief-case which, though made of oilskin, was very smart, he drank apple-cider and boasted that the roads would be ready by the first of August. These were the roads along which the river of wheat would flow to the elevators and the railway stations. My patients recovered, even the asthma cases, not because any art of mine had helped them, but because it was impossible to be ill in this atmosphere of general excitement. Only the exclamation: "Ah, the luminous man!" which invariably resounded whenever Borodulin came on the scene in the canteen still reminded us of the funny episode of the cholera scare.

At night in my "surgery," however, a transparent, moon-like, bluish light still burned. More and more luminous cholera-like vibrios came into the world. Already a good three dozen Petri dishes stood on the window-sills, slowly catching fire as the room became dark.

...It would not be enough to say that I had got used to receiving Andrei's letters. How it had happened I don't know, but they had become an integral part of my life, so that it was hard to imagine that there had been years—not days or months but years—when I had gone on calmly living without them. Amongst his letters, however, there was one which lay apart, not only in my desk but also in my mind, not mixed in with the others. Andrei himself had brought me this letter one day in Anzersk Settlement, late in the evening: "No, this is love, and I feel it with all my heart, which is all for you, Tanya dear."

Back in May I had managed to obtain the big room on the ground floor of the house where I lived on Commune Avenue, to use for receiving out-patients. It was partitioned into a smaller and a larger part; in the larger part I received patients, while in the smaller, further divided in two by a cupboard, I set up a dressing station and a dispensary. There was a hatch in the partition, through which I could ask the feldsher (who was still working with me then) for medicines which I needed, without leaving whatever work I might be doing.

One day the cook from one of the sections brought me her little boy, who had something wrong with his foot. Looking through the hatch, where the feldsher's red nose gleamed briefly from time to time, she complained against Leonty Kuzmich in a whisper. He had prescribed compresses, she said, but they had given no relief. I pondered, as I carefully felt the swollen foot. Something solid, which was hardly noticeable, slipped under my fingers. Again.... I went to the hatch intending to tell the feldsher to boil my instruments, and there in the dispensary I saw Andrei.

He was standing with his back to me, in overalls, with his cap in his hand—compact, with broad shoulders which, as always, he was holding erect in a way that was somehow all his own. I felt that I wanted to breathe and couldn't.

I wanted to call out, "Andrei!" but no voice came. At that moment the man standing in the dispensary turned round. It was the joiner whom I'd asked to come to fix up a cabinet for dressings.

I turned back to my patient, with beating heart. "So that's it!" I thought, with a sort of consternation. "I miss him like that, do I?"

The feldsher boiled the instruments, I quickly got down to my work, and within a few minutes I had pulled a huge splinter out of the sick foot. Then I had a talk about the wall cabinet with the joiner who was like Andrei.

...I wrote to Andrei telling him about the "cholera episode" and got back a reply which was perhaps not especially flattering to me, since he said that my luminous vibrios were no new contribution to science. "In another way, though," he wrote, "your letter cheered me up. Do you remember the doubts you had last year when you were choosing between research and practice, and were worried that you were only wasting your time working in the department? Well, you see, the knowledge of how to insert a needle into a rabbit's vein has proved useful to you, after all. And the people you mention in passing have evidently become near and dear to you."

I received many more letters from him, long and interesting, serious and amusing. In one of them he made fun of gravidan, a preparation which, now forgotten, was regarded then as an achievement of medical science. "The neurotic mare Devaluation will show record speed after an injection of gravidan" was the caption under a caricature of an old horse with a downcast, bewildered face.

And then I received a letter which surprised and disturbed me to such an extent that I couldn't bring myself to reply.

It was a boring, edifying and yet at the same time somehow careless letter, as though he'd forced himself to take up his pen to recount his moralizing thoughts to me. "You are in despair because your dispensary contains nothing but a few powders of unknown origin, and your instruments consist of two scalpels and a broken pair of tweezers?" he wrote. "See to it that you have the very best dispensary in the district. It depends on you alone. You wake up in a cold sweat: was that diagnosis correct? Did you get the commas mixed up in that prescription? Veresayev has already written about all this in his *Doctor's Note-Book*. Think rather about how life has marched on, or rather has not marched on but has rushed impetuously to meet you."

Almost nothing about himself, except to mention incidentally that he was going in to Arkhangelsk more often than he used to.

Then more about the dispensary, and about stomatology, which in his view should not be overlooked in a country practice. But not a single tender word, such as once had glowed from every page, showing that he wanted to write these words, at least, even if he couldn't say them to me. And he signed himself "Yours," not "Ever yours," which had been his usual ending. The lines, too, were even and the letters rounded, not flying forward, forward to me, as they used to.

I found this mention of Arkhangelsk strange also; so casual, whereas previously every trip to Arkhangelsk was an event about which Andrei wrote interestingly and in detail.... No, no, something must have changed!

* * *

That evening I was staying overnight at Dry Beam, one of the more distant sections of our farm. I had to wait to meet the first shift, as the Komsomol bureau had given me the job of having a talk with this shift, which was not fulfilling its plan of repair work.

For a long time I wandered idly among the tents, which billowed out like sails when the wind blew. Even in the evening the wind was hot. Again and again I re-read Andrei's letter, each time finding confirmation of what had seemed to me not long before only a vague surmise. Andrei didn't love me any more! He couldn't love me, otherwise he wouldn't write with such coldness and constraint.

The cook made up a bed for me in the office. I lay down, and might perhaps have slept but for the old watchman, who kept coming in every now and again to look at the time. I must have gone off at last, nevertheless, for the old man with his grey beard and his fluttering shirt was transformed into somebody different, belted and wearing a tall hat, and I couldn't make out why this new old man came in, just as the previous one had done, stood on tiptoe and, shading his eyes, gazed at the clock as though at the sun.

I woke up with a disagreeable feeling that something heavy and still had been brought into the room and placed near me. I rose on my elbow.

At that moment the lights of an approaching car slid across the windows and the figure of a man sitting at the table, his head hanging down, was snatched for an instant out of the darkness, flashed and disappeared.

"Who's there?"

The man got up and went away. I jumped out of bed.

"Grandad, who was that?"

"A mechanic from Central Hamlet looked in. The car for Bezymyanny has left. Are you for Bezymyanny?"

"No. Will the first shift be up soon?"

"Not very soon."

I went back to the office, lit the lamp again and re-read my letter ten or twenty times. It struck me as strange how little I had thought, even the previous day, about the fact that there was a man in the world who loved me. Suddenly I visualized with dazzling clearness that morning when Andrei left Leningrad, and I realized that one more hour would pass and we should lose each other for ever.

I had rushed to the railway station then. Why? For his sake? No, so as not to feel guilty. That was how it had always been. He loved me, but I thought of one thing only, what to do so as not to feel guilty.

"What did it mean, then?" I asked myself. "You expected this to go on all your life? You had got used to his love, and it had become an ordinary, everyday thing for you, something that happened by itself. Well, you'd better break yourself of that habit."

But it turned out that this was the most difficult thing of all, now that I understood it, to break myself of something which happened by itself.

"He's happy without you. Well, that's fine. Didn't you yourself strive to be just friends with him?"

"Yes, that was my goal."

"Then why do you find it so hard to force yourself not to grieve and not to think about him?"

I went out into the yard. Greasers were rattling funnels, talking together sleepily in the darkness. Then the old man started to wake people. "What shift are you? Third? Well, sleep then, I'm waking the first now, and the third's just gone to bed."

## RAIN

No rain fell during the whole of June, and the heat grew fiercer with every day that passed. I cannot find words to describe the motionless, scorching dryness of the air, from which, from morning onward, there was no escape. Almost every day they brought me workers suffering from heatstroke. This was called "being knocked out by the heat," and there was a terrible case when a tractor driver, in a semi-conscious condition, drove his tractor straight at a big tent where the students who had come to us to assemble the combines were sleeping. Fortunately, Repnin was not far away. True, without waiting to investigate he pummelled the poor driver so ferociously that he would have had to come to hospital anyway, even if he hadn't got heatstroke. But what was a black eye, even a very large one, compared with what might have been the end of this story?

The heat exhausted everybody. One of the mechanics thought up a home-made fan; a sheet stretched on a wooden frame, and a lever fixed to it, so that it could be operated by pressure of the foot without any need to get out of bed. Later on yet another discovery was made: the sheet should be soaked. Within a few days similar "punkahs" (where they got this strange word from I don't know) were to be seen in nearly every tent.

Added to the agonizing, unbearable heat was anxiety about the fate of the harvest.

The wheat stood even and proud, not stirring, as though it did not want to bend under the dry, merciless heat which poured down upon it all day long. But when people moved aside the filling ears and saw the deep cracks which had appeared in the parched earth, they looked at the wheat with a sick, suffering expression as though they were looking at a living creature who was dying of thirst....

And there was still no rain....

That morning, when I went to the director's conference, it was as though a turning point had at last been reached in nature. A light freshness swept into the still air, bent the whispering wheat and rocked the awning beneath which I was sipping apple-cider on Commune Avenue. Little clouds appeared in the monotonous, dazzling sky and reluctantly gathered themselves into one big cloud, from which, however, nobody expected any rain to fall—it was too ethereal! Nevertheless, when the conference began people went out from time to time from the smoke-filled little office, looked up at this cloud, and returned shaking their heads.

Ivan Ivanovich Muravyov, the same as ever, slim, pale, with a tuft on the top of his head, gave his report on the plan for the harvest, and the sunburned agronomists, engineers, section managers and members of the workers' committee, with their weather-beaten faces, listened attentively to him, their broad-brimmed straw hats laid upon their knees.

His pipe between his teeth, Danila Stepanich Repnin stood at the door, his legs apart and his chest thrust out, looking around him with an expression of good-natured self-confidence.

Maslov, his hair neatly brushed and his beard trimmed square, sat next to the director. A grey layer of tobacco smoke hung across the room, slowly creeping out of the open windows. What was he thinking about as he watched it with his impassive face which expressed nothing?... The airy cloud dispersed and in its place appeared another which resembled a gigantic eagle with a drooping, broken wing. One could even make out its beak, sharply bent and proud. Many small clouds were racing hurriedly after it and the eagle moved obliquely, swinging round in mid-sky as though trying deliberately to screen the sun with its good wing. And it did screen it. A shadow lay over Central Hamlet, across its fields and roads, suddenly noticeable as it cut across the yellow, burned-up steppe. A languor, a tension, a frustrated effort was felt in nature....

It was hard for one who knew very little about agriculture to understand whether the plan put forward by the director was good or bad, and whether Maslov, who spoke first, was right in opposing it so vigorously. He demonstrated with figures which he had ready to hand that the plan for the productivity of the threshing machines was exaggerated, and that round-the-clock work by the tractor fleet was in practice impossible, with the machines in the state they were in. In his opinion, the farm should not refuse to use the old horse-drawn reaping machines. On the contrary, they should be employed on a wide scale everywhere, not only in those sections where the wheat grew low. At this point one of the team-leaders asked him ironically, "Do you miss your draught-oxen?" but he continued his speech without replying. He spoke quietly but firmly, articulating every word properly, and the director, as he listened, rubbed his left hand vigorously with his right—I knew now that this was not just a habit.

Maslov concluded and then there was a long silence. At last Danila Stepanich spoke:

"Well, comrades," he began, looking around him with an impressive, formidable expression. "Allow me first of all to remind you of the sad story about the little boy who misled the peasants by crying 'Wolf, wolf,' for a joke when there was no wolf about the place. He did it two or three times. Then along came a real wolf and at once fell upon the flock that the boy was guarding. The boy started to shout again but nobody took any notice of him now. In the same way, we haven't come here to listen to Engineer Maslov crying 'Wolf, wolf,' " said Repnin, opening his eyes wide and suddenly becoming hostile. "Remember the sowing campaign, comrades, and ask yourselves: weren't the difficulties facing us then even greater, and didn't they seem to some to be insurmountable?"

He stopped speaking and listened. Everybody listened. A distant roar came through the open windows; it was the wheat bending under a strong gust of wind.

"Can we get the harvest in within the twenty days proposed in the director's plan?" Repnin went on. "Yes, we can. But on one condition; that we don't listen to the advocates of the old-style reapers. What does Engineer Maslov offer us?" And Danila Stepanich, turning down his fingers one by one, briefiy enumerated everything that Maslov had proposed.

The noise was heard again, as though thousands of tiny flails struck at once and then rolled away into the distance, rattling irregularly and resoundingly. The wheat bent before the wind. It grew dark. Everybody glanced at everybody else and smiled. They listened again. Thunder was heard and then a strong, even rain came down all at once, in long, sloping streams.

"This farm," Repnin went on, "hardly knows anything about socialist emulation yet. And for us, this. . . ."

He drew breath, sighed happily, flung open the door, and stood in the rain, tall, bareheaded, his shirt unbuttoned.

And the rain, like a master who has been long and impatiently awaited, was already setting things in order with all its might; babbling, rolling off the roof of the house where we were assembled, it beat down with verve upon the dust of the road and energetically thrashed the tents on Commune Avenue.

## BOTH RIGHT AND WRONG

It was at the beginning of July. I was lying in bed, sulky and ill (I'd caught a cold in spite of the terrible heat), with a book in my hand which had been open at one and the same place for a good two hours, when somebody came in through the open door and stood silent on the threshold.

Thinking it was the nurse I asked, "Is that you, Katya?"

"No, Tatyana Petrovna, it's me," answered a soft, calm voice.

A slim girl in a short-sleeved dress, with a light kerchief on her head and a small bundle in her hands, was looking at me and smiling. So intimately were my memories of Masha Speshneva associated with Anzersk Settlement that for a moment I still thought that this, the real Masha, not changed in the least, must be not Masha but somebody else, perhaps her sister or a double.

"Mashenka, is it you?"

"Yes, Tatyana Petrovna."

"Where've you come from?"

"From Salsk, where I'm spending my leave. My mother lives there. I'd long been meaning to visit her."

"And you decided to look me up? Or had you some business on our farm?"

Masha shook her head.

"No, I came just to call on you," she said simply. "If I'd known you were ill I'd have come long before. This is already the fifth day that I am in Salsk. No, no, Tatyana Petrovna, don't get up!"

"I will, too! I'm all right, I'm only lying down just for form's sake. And what's this 'Tatyana Petrovna'?"

Masha laughed.

"You're a doctor now, which you weren't before," she said.

"What rubbish!" And I hugged her and gave her a kiss.

She herself washed the dishes and laid the table. She undid her bundle, producing pasties from it, and although she was hungry (it was already getting dark and Masha had left Salsk before midday), she didn't touch them till I had sat down to the table. Somehow my bleak room with its white, plaster walls reminded me of our little bath-house in Anzersk Settlement, when Masha, after washing, came to table so slim and straight, with her plaits neatly wound round her head, and said as she settled herself down comfortably:

"Mother always bakes these fish and rice pasties for me. I've been very careful not to let them get crushed in the car."

...As we chatted I felt that it was not only a wish to visit me that had made her come to see me. There was nothing unusual about her wanting to see me, of course, and I would, without any hesitation, have gone to Salsk myself if I had known Masha had arrived there. But there was something forced in the exaggerated interest with which she questioned me about my work and compared the Anzersk Settlement medical centre with mine, as though she was really thinking and wanting to talk to me about something different. She was surprised to learn how much help I was receiving from the farm management.

"If only we got as much attention from the organizations concerned," she said with a sigh. "For instance, the Fishermen's Union could ensure supply of all the medicines we lack. But, oh no! They just wave you away, saying it's not their business."

We had said nothing about Andrei yet, apart from some meaningless phrases, but I already knew, God only knows how or why, that the secret thought worrying Masha had something to do with Andrei.

"He asked her to tell me that he's given me up for ever," I thought suddenly. The blood drained from my cheeks, and my heart began to beat abnormally fast. Masha stopped speaking in the middle of a word, looked me straight in the face, then dropped her eyes. This was the moment when we read each other's thoughts.

"Then you haven't a stomatologist nearer than Salsk? Why, teeth are very important now. A stomatologist comes from the city to see us once a month. Andrei Dmitrich arranged it with the Regional Public Health Office. He's a funny man, our stomatologist, always arguing that dentists are the most necessary people in the world."

She was still asking questions and I was still answering them, but both of us had understood already long since that behind this conversation of ours was hidden another, in which not Masha but I asked the questions, in agitation and haste, and could not wait for the answers.

"Aren't you married yet, Tatyana Petrovna?" she asked suddenly.

I laughed. "No, I'm not. And what about you, Mashenka?"

She gazed at me long and sorrowfully.

"No, I can't, you know," she replied at last, as though reproaching me with knowing why she couldn't and yet forcing her to explain.

"Tatyana Petrovna, you've probably guessed already what I wanted to tell you?"

"No, Masha."

"No? And I thought you'd guessed long ago. I wanted to tell you . . . about Andrei Dmitrich. But, first of all, clear up one point for me. . . . When you left Anzersk Settlement, did you promise to marry him?"

"Yes."

"And then later you refused? Forgive me for asking you so bluntly. I was thinking as I came along here that I ought to lead up to it indirectly. But apparently, from what you say, I didn't give you any hint?" Masha's lips quivered. "Don't think that Andrei Dmitrich told me. But I know that you refused. I'm right, aren't I?"

"Both right and wrong, Masha."

"How can that be, both right and wrong? Explain, Tatyana Petrovna. I really must know; when you know why, you won't be angry with me."

I thought it over. Then I said, "All right."

Masha caught her breath.

It was impossible to tell her everything that had passed between Andrei and me, beginning with our first leave-taking in Lopakhin, by the Tesma. But I felt I couldn't have talked more frankly about what had happened in Anzersk Settlement when, after I had prepared myself after many doubts to reply to his letter with a decisive "no," I had involuntarily answered "yes."

Masha listened to me without stirring. Her face flushed a little, her brows drew together, her lips assumed an obstinate expression. It was as though she were trying to solve a difficult problem, and was angry with herself for not being able to solve it. This problem was me, me with my doubts and hesitations over something which to her seemed strikingly clear.

"And now?" she asked quickly.

"And now," I began again, "now, Mashenka, he..." I was going to say, "he doesn't love me any more," but I said nothing. Everything came together in that moment—I had a sharp sense of that special emptiness which can be filled only by one thing, the presence of the loved one, and could not keep back the tears which were welling up in my eyes.

"And now he doesn't love me any more," I said at last, in a quiet yet somehow strange voice. "He must have realized that I'm not worthy of him."

Masha rose without taking her large, troubled eyes off me.

"What do you mean, he doesn't love you any more?" she asked me with amazement. "Did he write and say so? How do you know?"

I shook my head.

"No? So you decided it for yourself? Why don't you say something? For yourself?" She grasped my hands firmly. "Andrei Dmitrich loves you," she said loudly as though she were afraid I might not hear her. "Not only loves you, but can't live without you. He can't so much as think of anybody else in the world but you. He worships you, Tatyana Petrovna. If only you knew how he flings himself upon your letters! He would have gone off his head long ago if it weren't for the work that keeps him busy every minute of the day and night. Do you remember the path that leads from Anzersk Settlement into the ravine? Whenever he has a free moment he's off to that path, and walks and walks! Because you walked along that path with him.... I wanted to write to you, and started to, a thousand times. But how could I write about this? How could I find words to tell you how hard it is for him to live without you, Tatyana Petrovna?"

* * *

I persuaded her to spend the night with me. As it grew dark in the room and then later became bright with moonlight, we talked in whispers, and suddenly I saw close before me her grey, wistful eyes.

"Masha dear, how did I come to tell you all this?"

"You see, I.... If it had happened like that with me, I would have told you everything, too.... I'm only thinking, perhaps it would be best for me to leave Anzersk Settlement. My health has been suffering. But, first of all, the District Public Health Service won't let me go, and secondly, I expect Andrei Dmitrich will soon move to Moscow himself."

"To Moscow?"

"Oh yes. You don't know what a lot of changes there have been since the time when you were with us. He's been elected to the District Party Committee, you know, that's how highly they think of him.... Once already they've wanted to transfer him to Moscow; true, they didn't persist, they just made him an offer and he refused it. He told me afterwards that he didn't want to go and work in the People's Commissariat. All the same, they won't leave him with us much longer."

"Who won't?"

"Why, who do you think? The State," said Masha firmly. "The State realizes that Anzersk Settlement is too small a job for a man like him. Only later, under communism, will there be doctors like him in every village."

Masha was silent for so long that I was afraid to move lest I wake her up; I thought she must be asleep. Unfamiliar footsteps sounded from the corridor, not at all like the noiseless, careful steps of my neighbour. I thought that I ought to go and have a look; perhaps it was a stranger? But if I got up I should awaken Masha.

She was breathing deeply but unevenly. Her eyelids quivered as she slept, one of her plaits stuck out over her ear in a funny way, and her delicate face, from which the tense expression had quickly fled, seemed even more delicate in the moonlight. "It doesn't matter, everything is still ahead for her," I thought confusedly, "and Masha will yet find happiness. But out in the kitchen there is a stranger."

Somebody walked noisily by on the other side of the wall, panted and twice turned on the water tap, perhaps trying to see if the water would come. Then everything became quiet again and so I didn't get up....

All around me it was wonderful—the walls of the room, which the moonlight covered with a blue cloth, so that it was impossible to imagine that these were my old, crudely-plastered walls, and the song "Don't cry, my darling," which sounded now near and now far off, sung by tractor-drivers and country girls who were out strolling in the steppe. My hand, which I had placed under my head, had gone numb, but I didn't remove it, I only moved my fingers so as to drive the numbness away. I don't know how long I lay there, trying not to frighten away the feeling of happiness which kept rising in me.

"And, you see, it's not as though he's only a doctor, he's really a public figure," said Masha suddenly, as though she hadn't been asleep; "and he's so well educated. Did you know that he's learnt German? He talks German as well as you and I talk Russian."

This was so funny, Masha starting to talk again in mid-sentence, as though nothing had happened, that I burst out laughing.

"What's the matter?" she asked in alarm. "Did I say something wrong?"

I explained.

"Really?" said Masha, with distress. "Was I asleep? And I thought we had just been talking together."

"Well, go to sleep. I don't want to sleep. I'll think. But you sleep; you're tired from your journey."

* * *

It vaguely seemed to me that there was a pool with walruses splashing about in it, and on opening my eyes, I did not realize immediately that somebody actually was splashing about on the far side of the wall, either in the corridor or in the kitchen. I lay and listened. I could not believe that this was Maslov snorting, beating his bare body with the palms of his hands and singing in a false bass, "There stands a wondrous palace...." But who was it, then? Suddenly the song broke off, and without any pause there came such an angry snort that I instinctively leapt out of bed. Masha opened her eyes.

"What's going on?"

"Can't you hear?"

It was now not a snorting but a growling which we heard, and it seemed to be bringing the frail "Sovkhozstroi" house (that was the name of the organization which had built our Central Hamlet) to the point of collapse.

"We must have a look," said Masha, bravely. "Perhaps it's some animal that's climbed in and can't get out."

"What sort of animal? A lion?"

"Why should it be a lion? Perhaps it's a big dog."

I cautiously opened the door into the corridor a little. The growling had stopped but a kind of hollow sound now came from the kitchen, as though somebody was clapping his hands.

We bravely went forward and had got as far as the kitchen door when another mighty roar burst forth which somehow literally knocked my legs from under me. I can't tell if it affected Masha in the same way.

"Sh-sh. It's not just one," Masha whispered. (Probably what she meant to say was, "It's not just one dog.") "Have you got anything? A poker?"

"Never mind that. I know who it is," I said suddenly, and quickly went ahead of her into the kitchen.

Repnin, his head thickly covered with soap, was standing near the water-pipe, wearing only bathing-trunks. He was pushing his little finger into the tap and then pulling it out again, evidently hoping by this strange method to entice water to come. The tap wheezed but no water came.

"Who the devil's there?" he yelled. "Is it you, Tatyana?"

"Yes, Danila Stepanich. But how did you get here?"

Masha, who was standing behind me, giggled quietly and Repnin, not noticing her, fell upon me.

"Oh, so you're laughing at me, eh?" he shouted. "I came here because that dumbell Maslov persuaded me to spend the night. 'At my place it's cool, at my place there's this and that. We must have a talk, it's an important matter.' He promised to give me some vodka, but he's gone off somewhere. I came, like a fool, and never slept the whole night. The windows flap and there's somebody scraping about. I wanted to get a wash and now, if you please, the water won't come!"

"It's all right, it's my gophers that make the scraping noise. Shall I bring you some water?"

Masha giggled again and now Repnin caught sight of her.

"Oh, so you're not alone?" he asked in a menacing voice, spreading the flakes of dirty soap all over his face. "That's the best yet! Perhaps you'd like to call all the rest of the residents of this house here? An extraordinary sight! Hurry and see! A man's soaped himself and the water won't come!"

He managed to rub his eyes clear and stared at Masha. Rosy from sleep, laughing, scared, she was wearing my brightly-striped dressing-gown, which suited her very well, He took a step back and stood stock-still, with open mouth into which at once the soap dripped.

* * *

I tied a towel round his head and he sat very quiet on a stool in the kitchen for a long time while I boiled the kettle. The water had started to run, and it was plain that he was torn between desire to shove his head under the tap and fear of Masha, who had said to him that "nobody washes his head in cold water." I say "fear," because I don't know what else to call the sentiment which was reflected in all his movements and words and, apparently, his thoughts, too, if he still retained the power to think. What had become of that self-confidence of his, that bragging, that triumphant, deafening guffaw? The kettle boiled, and he began to wash his head. Suddenly he twisted round in such an unnatural way in order to look at Masha, who was at that moment pouring hot water over him with a business-like air, that he reminded me of the "serpent man," an attraction which always used to stir my imagination when I was a child.

During tea he invited us to come with him to see some new road-making machines tested, and began talking about these machines boringly and at length, which was quite unlike him. When he learnt that Masha was staying only one day with me, he meditated and then said that he, too, had to go to Salsk, on very important business. I said nothing, and this was enough to set him arguing warmly that he really must go to Salsk, as though I were his boss and it depended on nobody else but me whether he should go there.

He drank four glasses of tea, and would have drunk another four if I had not reminded him that the test, as he had told us himself, was due to begin at ten precisely, and it was now a quarter to.

## I'LL WAIT FOR YOU

Danila Stepanich had drawn from me a promise that Masha was going to stay till the following day, and I pleaded with her to do this, especially as I didn't at all want her to go. She was going to stay in Salsk only for a few days more, so that there was little hope that we'd see each other again soon.

"You see, I promised Andrei Dmitrich that I'd be back in Anzersk Settlement by the middle of July," she said gravely. "And he can't wait any longer for me, because he has to attend the plenum of the District Party Committee, and the medical-aid station can't be left in charge of a young nurse."

She said this with an expression as though she had completely forgotten those remote times when she herself was a young nurse. . . .

Since morning I had been thinking what and how to write to Andrei; no, I mean "how," for "what" to write I knew perfectly well. Masha helped me just by being with me. There were a lot of patients to be seen that day and she took the place of Katya, who was attending to a serious case in the ward. Later we went the rounds of the patients, and in the evening Repnin took us to the circus (the Rostov circus was on tour and visiting our farm).

It was a splendid evening, which would have been still better if Danila Stepanich had not recovered the gift of logical speech with redoubled force. He always liked to talk a lot—that I knew very well indeed. But I don't think he ever talked so much in all his life. While we were at the circus he told us how he had once performed in the ring himself; he lay down while a car drove over him, for which he received 9 rubles 50 kopeks.

"It was in Kirilov, a little town on the Sheksna," he explained, laughing. "I'd been doing my practical work there and hadn't enough money to buy my return ticket. There was a strong man performing at the Summer Garden; he used to lie down and let a car drive over him. I watched his act, and then went to the manager and asked how much he would pay me if I were to do the same. He replied, 'And who'll be responsible if you kick the bucket?' To be sure, I didn't lie directly under the car, but under a plank; a thinnish one though, only two inches thick."

"What happened after that?" Masha asked, with horror.

"Nothing much, I got up. But my ribs did feel queer for a long time afterwards."

Masha asked what institute Danila Stepanich had attended and we listened to an inspired account of the part played in his life by the mere idea of roads.

"My father was a pointsman, and I used to lie awake at night listening to the whistling of the locomotives and thinking: 'The track. Where does it lead? Who built it?' As a boy, wherever I went I always returned by a different route. I used to sit for hours over a map estimating how many journeys had been made, over land and sea, before it could be compiled. How much work had been put into it! I used to look at the stars, thinking again: 'There are roads leading to them, too.' And I wanted to build such a road, even if only one in my whole lifetime, along which Danila Repnin would be the first person in the world to travel."

Musical clowns had played and sung something and retired, and now a girl acrobat in white tights embroidered with spangles ran into the ring, sprang lightly on to the trapeze and hung head downward from it. As I watched her I had difficulty in keeping back my tears. But I knew that I was crying not out of pity for the acrobat, but from a feeling of happiness which now merged with everything I saw and heard, and which had been born in my heart the moment I knew Andrei loved me as before.

"I only have to close my eyes," I had already written to Andrei in my mind, "and you appear before me just as I saw you last, at the railway station. If you can forgive me, I'm waiting for you and shall be waiting for you whenever you come."

On returning from the circus that night I wrote to Andrei. Masha promised to post my letter in Salsk so that it should go off quicker. I hugged her tight, with all my heart, as though I had a premonition that now we wouldn't see each other for a long time.

The following day Danila Stepanich and I saw her off.

The lorry drew up and, after holding a whispered conversation with the driver, Danila Stepanich seated Masha in the cabin. Then he handed her her bundle as though this little cotton bundle contained fragile and precious things. The lorry went off and he stood for a long time gazing after it. Indeed, it looked as though this huge man wanted lo laugh and to cry at the same time....

* * *

A few days later Borodulin, who since the "cholera episode" sometimes came to drink tea with me and chat about present-day methods of medical treatment, worried me very much by telling me that Danila Stepanich was lost, and that Dorstroi, the road-building organization, was hunting for him all over the farm. But Danila Stepanich was soon discovered—on the track. I heard how a black-eyed waitress, thin and exhausted by the heat, who used to go white and red when Repnin came into the canteen, had asked a technician from the road-making team where he was and the technician had replied, with a faint smile, "He's on the track."

The director, who was fond of Repnin and for that very reason was always very strict with him, rang up Dorstroi Headquarters, and said that with an attitude to business like that he doubted if the road network would be ready by September, to say nothing of August. I don't know what the answer to this was (the conversation took place in my presence), but after a brief pause he shouted back with fury, "Where is he, anyway, this Repnin of yours?" And the receiver answered, with careful articulation, "On . . . the . . . track."

Repnin was on the track. But only I guessed that this track led straight to a little house on the outskirts of Salsk. . . .

Just as on a cinema screen, he suddenly appeared before me, thin but cheerful, wearing his check riding-breeches and canvas boots, with all his broad-bottomed graders and road-rollers hunched like Brontosauruses. It was out on the steppe, behind the farm. I hailed him and he shouted back, "Tatyana?" Jumping down from a grader he hurled himself towards me, kicking up clouds of dust. Before I could collect my wits he had kissed me on both cheeks, lifted me up in his arms and carried me a little way along the road. Then he ran off to catch up with his machines, which were already a long way off. I sniffed, wiped my eyes, swore, and shook the dust off myself.

## ENEMIES

It seemed long ago, that morning when Central Hamlet was completely deserted, and the machines were darkly outlined against the background of what was still a night sky, hardly touched by the pink of the sunrise, while the director rode along the columns standing up in his little Ford as though taking a military parade, and a small red flag flew from the mast of the meteorological station. There had been a frightening, mounting roar as dozens of machines simultaneously cut into the submissive, trembling wheat. It was now the third day of the harvest, only the third! Ahead were seventeen more such busy days, crammed full of toil, heat, short meetings of the Komsomol, visits by workers, students, peasants. Communiqués "from the harvest front" were read over the wireless and printed in the newspaper. Without stopping work, the farm celebrated the commissioning of the Stalingrad Tractor Factory. A rest-day devoted to voluntary work was held at the unloading point, Komsomol members lifting five hundred bags of grain, which had got damp, up to the first floor of the granary and scattering it to dry.

Grain, that was what they argued about, thought about and worried about. Grain lashed into the lorries from the combines, and sped from the sections to the elevator along the roads which had been laid over the empty steppe. They weren't able to load it into the waggons, and it lay in golden pyramids by the stockades.

...Long since and more than once I had had occasion to regret not having mentioned the subject of the farm's medical service during harvest-time when I attended the director's conference. The number of workers employed nearly doubled in this period, but the medical centre consisted as before of the doctor, the nurse (substituting for a feldsher), the care-taker and the sick-nurse. When I rang him up, Drozdov first promised to send me a second nurse, but then said that all available nurses had been taken by the Gigant, and for a long time.

"The only person I can send you," he wheezed merrily, "is a certain old naval doctor. But the problem is, will he find a glass of rum at your place?"

In fact, if I was to work normally in such conditions and arrive in time wherever I might be needed, I ought to have had a car at my disposal. But Muravyov only laughed, silently but heartily, when I came to him with this request.

When I repeated my arguments and added that I found nothing funny in them, he replied:

"Tatyana Petrovna, I realize that it's a serious matter, but all the same I can't see any possibility of giving you a car."

"All right, let me have a horse."

"Can you ride a horse?"

I shook my head.

"There isn't a suitable carriage available. The carts have no springs in them, and, besides, they may come in useful for the work."

"All right, I'll try riding."

Muravyov grinned.

"And once again, I don't see anything to laugh at," I said angrily.

"Well, I like that," he said, and spread his hands. "One isn't allowed to laugh now! Very well, I'll see you're fixed up."

* * *

The groom who brought me the sad roan mare, whose name was "Midge," said only that she "knew her job." I interpreted this to mean that in all doubtful questions which might arise in connection with my first experience of horse-riding, the decision should be taken not by myself but by the mare, Midge. And that was the principle I followed the day I went to the section with the strange name of "Zlodeisky."* At first everything went well. Midge moved, albeit slowly, in a straight line which fully corresponded to the route I wished to take. Suddenly, however, she turned off to the right (towards the stables, no doubt), and when I pulled on her left-hand rein she put down her head and stopped. In vain I pleaded with her, cried "Giddy-up" and gave her my heel. Midge stood still, thoughtfully moving her ears. Eventually an old woman came out of a house at the edge of the car-park, and, to my shame, struck her a blow with a switch, whereupon Midge reluctantly moved off.

Next day I felt that from then on I would ride a horse only if sentenced to do so. But another day came. Repnin, who was a splendid horseman, showed me the basic procedures, and soon the pages of *The Tractor* featured a caricature which I have kept on my table to this day: a terrified girl in a broad-brimmed hat rushing along at full speed on a huge horse, its tail flying in the wind.

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* I.e., "Rascally."

At all events, as I settled myself in the mornings into the wide, uncomfortable man's saddle, I thought that really I was very lucky, for in this busy time I should have been simply lost without a horse. My practice had nearly doubled; the *sukhovei* had begun.

This was not that flaming whirlwind which covers heaven and earth in an instant with a black haze, and can lift tons of grain into the air. It was something like a hot breath, very strong and regular, which did not cease either by day or by night.

The sun was small, ugly, without rays, just as it is when one looks at it through smoked glass during an eclipse. Dense clouds of tiny sand-grains hung in the air without settling. The sand was everywhere, in the beds, in one's clothes. It crunched in our teeth in the canteen when we ate soup "with little blue eyes in it," as for some reason we called pearl-barley soup on our farm. Everybody went about with red, swollen eyelids, and unexpectedly I had to become a specialist in eye troubles. Sunstroke cases became much more common. In short, it was impossible even to compare the still heat of June with this regularly blowing flame, which from early morning made you feel that you were sitting in a Russian stove.

The experts from the Rostov Institute of Drought defined the danger as being threatening in the highest degree: after six or seven days the grain would inevitably perish from the effect of the *sukhovei*. This meant that the gathering of the grain must be carried through half as fast again as had been planned. It meant that machines must be repaired faster, fuel brought up, grain sent to the elevator, and all the thousand miscellaneous jobs which made up the lives of combine-operators, mechanics and tractor-drivers carried out as speedily as possible.

"Well, what do you think of it, Tatyana? Like the end of the world, eh?" said Repnin mirthlessly when we met in the canteen.

"I can't say. I haven't yet had the opportunity of being present at the end of the world."

Repnin ordered tea, four glasses for himself, and two for me. Taking sheets of paper from his writing-pad he placed one over each glass, to keep out the dust.

"No, it is like it," he said, sternly. "And I can already see the sinners who are going to burn in hell. They will, or I shall...."

He went pale, and banged the table with his fist.

* * *

In those days I was carrying out a drive to organize break-through assault-teams, a job given me by the Komsomol Bureau. Though I have written "in those days," it would be more accurate to write "in those hours" or even "in those minutes." Days and nights had long since become confused, and it was not for nothing that our newspaper *The Tractor* abandoned the enumeration of days used throughout the world, and printed in place of a date the number of days left till the end of the harvest....

Everything went wrong on that miserable day. As I had calls to make in two sections, I had asked Katya to wake me up as soon as it was light, but she forgot, or else took pity on me, and didn't rouse me until the sun was already high in the sky. My head had been aching a little the previous evening; I had hoped that this would pass off during the journey, as it usually did, but it didn't. All the way to Dry Beam I tried to master the irritation which kept boiling up in me against the heat and against any trifle which even the day before would not have distracted my attention for a second.

... I could find nobody to ask where I could see Klava Borisova, a tractor-driver, who, as I had been informed from this section the previous evening, had injured her hand.

All around was deserted, the only person in sight was the old watchman whom I'd met before, and he was asleep in the shade under a carriage, knocked out by the heat. I tied up my horse and went into the kitchen. The cook, a short, stout woman, was washing some tin plates and hurling them noisily on to the kitchen-range. I asked her where the patient was lying, and in reply she sniffed, "Lying? She's running around all over the camp." Nevertheless, she took me to see Borisova.

A girl of about eighteen, snub-nosed and ruddy-complexioned, was sleeping soundly all alone in a big tent, one badly-bandaged hand lying across her breast. A book had fallen from her other hand, which hung down out of bed, and lay on the ground. I did not enter the tent through the "door," but through one of the joins, which I lifted aside, so that the entire simple household of this girl was laid out before me from an unexpected angle. A little mirror hung behind the bed, and beside it I noticed the photograph of a thin, handsome, stern-looking young fellow wearing the military-style tunic which in those years was a sort of Komsomol uniform. On the home-made trunk beneath the bed lay a faded paper blotting-pad, and beside it a neat pile of books. What books did she have? I squatted down to see. *Manual of the "International" Tractor.* Tolstoi's *Anna Karenina.* Furmanov's *Chapayev.* On the ground lay a dictionary of foreign words. At that moment the girl stirred, sighed and opened her eyes.

"Hullo, doctor."

"You know me, then?"

"Not personally. But I heard your talk at the Komsomol meeting."

As I unbandaged her wounded hand I thought with satisfaction that it had been a good idea to issue every fifth worker with an individual field-dressing before the harvest began.

"Am I in a bad way, doctor?"

"What do you mean by 'bad'?"

"Is my hand done for?"

"Far from it! But how did it happen?"

"How? A party of visitors had arrived, and Kostya (that's our combine-operator) and I had begun to show them the combine, when somebody started the engine. . . ."

"Who was it?"

"I don't know. . . . Don't you see what's being done, doctor?" she went on, heatedly. "Last week we had a stoppage lasting four hours. We had only just started and then suddenly, 'Stop!' You know what a din the tractor makes. I thought I'd misheard, but Kostya again shouted, 'Stop!' I jumped down, and what did I find? The teeth in the roller had been knocked out, and on the sieves there was a piece of piping lying amid the chaff. There's your 'who,' " she said angrily. "Oh, what's the use of talking, doctor. There I was, working as a shepherd at Natarovsk hamlet (it isn't there any more), and do you know how hard it was for me to leave? My family saw me off with curses! What sort of a life was that for a girl! They wanted me to spend my life looking after sheep, with a crook for company. I gave up my own mother and father," the girl said, bursting out into tears. "Do you think that was easy to do?"

I listened and said nothing. The whole farm had lately been talking about the same thing that was worrying this girl. A column of tractors had been sent out into the field without tents, without a field-kitchen, without funnels or water-cans. Every day the newspaper carried stories of mysterious damage to combines. Dried dung, mixed with straw and placed under the timber store, had caught fire from causes unknown. A steppe fire had broken out beside the stockades where the grain lay, and the wind had driven the fire straight towards them. Besides this secret war there was an open one, too, which I met at every step on my journeys around the farm. Whence, for instance, came the rumours that the grain was "already 'touched' and even if we gathered it, it would burn all the same"?

I patted the girl's head.

"It's nothing, Klava; it'll get better."

"Yes, it'll get better," she said, looking gloomily at the bandaged hand. "And meanwhile. . . ."

It was with a heavy heart that I said good-bye to Klava, having promised to send a car to fetch her that evening.

My horse could hardly drag itself along. The steppe was yellowish grey, burned-up, deserted, with only grasshoppers jumping in zigzags and frightened, timid bustards flying heavily along and falling into the grass.

Water appeared in the distance, something that was neither river nor lake, gleaming like metal in the empty steppe. Beyond it, on a flat shore, huts could be seen quite distinctly, with open shutters and smoke coming out of their chimneys. It was a mirage, and the nearer I approached this illusory village, on the bank of a river, the further it retreated from me . . . further and further, until it merged with the level, flowing, wave-like movement of the air as it ran over the burning land.

"Yes, it's not so simple, not so easy. And the struggle we're waging is not only for six-and-a-half hundredweight per acre from this wild, abandoned steppe, overgrown with weeds but for a new consciousness, which will make this remote and savage steppe yield not five-and-a-half or six-and-a-half but twenty-odd hundredweight per acre, and make this girl, who only yesterday was dozing beside her sheep, leaning on her crook, a 'proud mistress of the world.'" Those noble words, "proud mistress of the world," were not mine but Gorky's. The autumn before he had come to speak at our farm, but I, alas, had been away for a few days.

The sun was already high in the sky when I reached Tsygansky section, and the first person I met in this section, memorable for the "cholera," was Borodulin.

"Hullo, Ivan Lukich!" I shouted.

He mumbled something and was continuing on his way, when he recognized me and stopped:

"Hullo, doctor."

We were always glad to meet each other. He always wiped his dirty, greasy hand on his overalls and held it out to me with a sweeping movement, as people do when greeting children. He was sincerely proud that the luminous vibrios were "his own," and laughed heartily when I promised to decorate with them the carriage in which he lived at Tsygansky section. Whenever I saw him I heard some news about his niece, and only very rarely was Besshtanko, the "delay expert," not mentioned in our talks.

Today, however, the mechanic was not himself; his cheeks were sunken and his inflamed eyes held a sullen look.

"What's new, Ivan Lukich?"

He shrugged his shoulders gloomily.

"Come along with me and you'll learn the news."

"How's Shurkhin?"

Shurkhin was one of the best team-leaders on the farm. He had been taken seriously ill the morning of the previous day.

"Come along," Borodulin repeated. "I'll show you him, too."

It was a short conference of the leaders of the section, and my patient was sitting among the healthy ones, with an air of having forgotten altogether that the day before he had fallen to the ground in a dead faint. The conference was being held in a "deck," which was what, for some reason, they called at Tsygansky section a carriage used as a dwelling, and was devoted to the problem of lubricating oil. Instead of *avtol*, somebody, no one knew who, had sent them a kind of oil that was not at all suitable.

The doors and windows of the carriage were closed to keep out the dust. A carbide lamp irregularly lit up the thoughtful, tired faces.

"Think something up," Shurkhin said to the mechanic hesitantly.

He was a hook-nosed man, no longer young, with a large mole on his cheek.

"What can we think up?" muttered Borodulin.

They were silent. Quietly I sat down beside Shurkhin, took his hand, and felt his pulse. His hand was hot and his pulse irregular, 110.

"You're ill, Comrade Shurkhin. You must go to bed."

He looked at me absently and took his hand away.

"Ivan Lukich, we must find the way out . . ." he said.

## DANILA STEPANICH

I visited two other sections. Everywhere people were working, without sleep or rest, in the heat, in stuffy air, in reddish dust which covered their faces so closely that it was enough for them to raise their eyes and a kind of smoke flew from their reddened eyelids. Machines voyaged like ships enveloped in dust across the fields, combine-operators stood on their high bridges like captains, and the endless belt, as it was called, raced away, chattered, and came round again carrying the cut wheat. These were the combines. The unstable "young" roads laid by Repnin's team trembled beneath the weight of the lorries loaded with grain.

A seething of work was felt everywhere and in everything.

There was a flap on at Bezymyanny when I arrived there, caused by the sheaf-carriers suddenly dropping their work and walking out. A man whom witnesses described variously, some as short and bow-legged, wearing a fur cap, others as tall, wearing a straw hat full of holes, had appeared in one of the *artels* and said that it was possible to get contracts for work by the day at the farms near Grafskaya Station, and that this was nearly twice as paying a proposition as piece-work. And the *artel* had eaten its dinner, demanded its money and walked out, followed by a second and a third.

. . . I caught up with these people five miles from Kosh, got down from my horse, hailed them, and said that I must have a talk with them about business. Voices cried:

"What more business have we got with you?"

But I explained to them very calmly that their work was important and concerned not only themselves but the whole Union.

Again they shouted at me:

"What Union?"

"The Soviet Union," I said. "What else could it be? We have only the one."

Among the sheaf-carriers were a few women who had been treated by me, so that from the start I addressed myself particularly to them. But, still, I should never have achieved anything, but for the feeling of irritation which had been pursuing me since the morning, and which had finally been transformed into hatred, making my heart thump. The intense efforts of the dozens and hundreds of people I had seen during that long day had unavoidably stumbled over some hidden, foul obstacle—that was what had now become perfectly clear to me, and I couldn't help talking about it. It was a poor agitational approach, no doubt, but just then I was not thinking much about approaches, and simply spoke of what was weighing on my heart. Apparently I cut short rather successfully some bull-faced man who pushed his way through the crowd and shouted:

"Who wants to swallow all this? Aren't you fed up with listening to these fat-heads?"

In the end I managed to persuade the sheaf-carriers to come back. We settled it that only the foreman of the *artel* should go on to Grafskaya Station, to find out if it was true that the individual farmers paid more for work by the day. Knowing the economic position of the local peasantry, I had no doubt that this rumour had been circulated with one purpose only, to disrupt the harvesting of the State Farm's crop.

Exhausted, I returned to Central Hamlet, and before doing anything else went to see the director to tell him the story about the lubricating oil, which had particularly shocked me. But the director had gone with the Secretary of the

Party committee to one of the distant sections. I took a shower and then went to see my patients. After that I had supper, during which I could hardly fight off the drowsiness which suddenly ran all through my body, undressed hastily, got into bed—and couldn't sleep. Among many vivid impressions received during the past day, the face of Klava Borisova appeared before me, sad and worried, her eyes filled with tears, as though she were there in person. Had I done right in postponing an operation? What if general blood poisoning were to set in? The car had left to fetch Borisova at eight, it was eleven now, and Katya had not knocked for me yet. The ward was on the ground floor, and Katya used to knock on the ceiling with the stick of a mop when it was necessary for me to come down.

The window showed vaguely through the darkness. I ought to open that window, so that the freshness of the night might enter the room. I should breathe it in with all the power of my lungs, so that my heart stopped for an instant. It would be freezing cold, but later, when I had got warm under the blanket, I would go off to sleep: that was what I used to do when I couldn't sleep. But no, not at all! If I opened the window, the burning breath of the sandy desert would burst into the room. The *sukhovei* sweeps along both where there are roads and where there are no roads, leaps over roofs, shakes the tents, enters along with people into their houses, and breaks into their short, restless sleep.

I dozed off, for five minutes it seemed, but when I opened my eyes, I could see the weak morning light already wandering somewhere far off across the steppe. I heard steps in the kitchen. Maslov had returned and was washing before going to bed.

All right, then. This was what I must do: I must get up and write a note to the director reporting all the things I'd seen during the day. After that I'd see if Katya was asleep. It was after two o'clock. Borisova had been fetched, there could be no doubt of that, but Katya hadn't awakened me. She was a good girl, but if that had happened I would have to reprimand her.

I got out of bed, stretched myself, blinked hard, and then opened my eyes in fright. Somebody was coming up the stairs so noisily that my laboratory glassware rang plaintively in response. The outside door was flung open. . . . Was it somebody for me?

"Doctor, are you asleep?"

In a whisper I replied:

"No, Danila Stepanich, I'm not."

"Why not?"

"Have you come here at half past three in the morning to find out why I'm not asleep?"

"N-no," replied Repnin, thoughtfully. "But may I?"

"May you what?"

"Come in?"

"What for?"

He was silent.

"It's about something important."

He puffed impatiently behind the door, stamped his feet, breathed heavily and sighed all the time while I was dressing.

"Soon?"

"In a minute."

I unlocked the door and he came in, covered all over with dust, unshaven, looking older, tired.

"What's the matter with you?"

"Nothing special. May I sit down? Could you give me a glass of tea?"

"Of course."

I lit the oil-stove. The kettle wasn't cold yet.

"What's up?"

"Nothing special," Repnin repeated impatiently. "Listen, Tatyana. I want to ask you a question. What do you think of this man?"

He stared at a point somewhere beside me with an impassive, disdainful expression on his face. It wasn't a very good likeness of Maslov, but I guessed that that was who he meant.

"Well.... Not much."

"Nor do I," said Repnin, thoughtfully. "But he... is he at home?"

"He came in not long ago."

"Hell! So he's heard.... He knows I'm with you, then?"

"Possibly, even probably. And he's not the only one, either."

"How's that?"

"Because you stamped up the stairs with your big boots, and then shouted loud enough for the whole house to hear, 'Doctor, are you asleep?' But why shouldn't he know that you're with me?"

"Because.... Still, it doesn't mean a thing. Tell me, Tatyana," he now began very seriously, his voice sinking to a whisper. "Does he have visitors from outside? Not people from the farm. We know each other, after all."

"Yes, he does. Somebody came to the ward once late at night, and I heard Katya go out and say, 'Engineer Maslov lives on the first floor.' Then his brother came to stay with him.... That was in June. No, it must have been in May."

"Did his brother stay with him long?"

"I don't remember. Three days, perhaps. Maslov introduced me to him."

"Indeed?"

The kettle was singing. I laid the table.

"But tell me, Tatyana; you and he are neighbours and you must have had conversations with him?"

"Yes, we did have a conversation."

"What about?"

"About youth. About how lonely he felt, and how he wanted to join a group of young people, because he felt so passionately interested in everything that was going on around him."

Repnin shrugged his shoulders with disappointment.

"And how did it end? With a thermometer?"

"What do you mean, with a thermometer?"

"For measuring feelings. He told me that feelings could be measured with a thermometer, but that they can hardly exist where the mercury stands at 94 degrees below zero, as at Verkhoyansk."

"Yes, that's right!"

"He didn't even take the trouble to think up anything new," Repnin muttered angrily through his teeth. "Very well, then. But now I must be off. . . ."

"I've made you some tea."

"Oh, yes." He drank it hastily. "And don't ask me anything about this business. It's serious."

"All right, Danila Stepanich."

"Don't tell anybody that we've discussed him, either. I came to see you—well, for any reason you like. My back hurts. It often does; it's something I brought back from the war. You haven't heard from Mashenka?" he asked, with a sudden change of expression to tenderness.

"Is it so long since she left?"

"Oh, a long, long time. Doesn't it seem to you a long time, Tatyana? A thousand years, eh?"

I shook my head.

"Well never mind, a hundred then. Let's not haggle."

Katya knocked just as we were saying good-bye. That meant that they'd brought Borisova. I showed Danila Stepanich out of the front door. Why I did it I don't know, but after he had gone I went outside and watched him as he strode off, confidently, in his broad, free way. For a long time I could see his tall, determined figure as he receded into the distance along Commune Avenue—wide, torn up by tractors, and lit by the first rays of the sun. . . .

* * *

I had just finished examining Klava, and was sitting beside her, thinking that it would be pleasant to take a nap for an hour or two and very pleased that my treatment had worked and that it was almost certain that I'd succeed in avoiding an amputation, or that, at most, I'd only have to go so far as removing one finger, when through the window came the sound of an approaching car. Muffled voices were heard. "Swing her round! Left hand down! Careful!"

Then they brought Danila Stepanich in to me on a tarpaulin, seriously injured, his head rolling on his shoulders, his eyes open but unseeing.

## PRESCRIPTION SHEET

The *sukhovei* had died down, and at the height of intense work there began to emerge, as yet hardly noticeable, a feeling that we were winning. The director appealed to the workers of the State Farm in an address in which he called for "an immediate and decisive turn in the course of the harvesting," and this meant victory, because only the day before he couldn't have asked for a decisive turn from people who had reached the last limits of effort.

A Komsomol conference was held in the still unfinished theatre. Posters depicting an aeroplane, a donkey and a tortoise hung from the scaffolding by the main entrance. They showed the comparative progress of the teams taking part in socialist emulation. Happy confidence that their hard task had been brought to its conclusion, or nearly there, was clearly apparent in the businesslike way the young workers examined these posters.

A great responsibility rested in those years on the workers of our farm—to show the peasants the advantages of collective enterprise. This task was broken down into hundreds and thousands of everyday and every-hour problems: whether our farm helped the local peasants by sending machines to work in the collective-farm fields, or whether we discussed at an open Party meeting the question "Why the First Shock-Brigade is not working as a shock-brigade should." Each of these jobs, big and small, was part of the offensive against the static world of rural life, shaped during the passage of centuries.

The attacking army had to deal not with disembodied phantoms, but with a real foe who damaged bridges and roads, set fire to grain and smashed machines, that is, the weapons with which the offensive was being carried on. At the same time, however, a battle was being waged for the mind of the peasant, who stood astounded at the unheard-of things this army was accomplishing in the virgin steppe, which almost every summer was burnt up by the *sukhovei.*

Peasant delegations visited us nearly every day—from neighbouring districts, from the Terek, from the Don, from Siberia—and sometimes the combine-operators, for instance, would complain about the visitors, who took up valuable time. Really, though, these delegations did not hinder our work, but helped it.

We had to work in such a way that real, irrefutable facts should demonstrate the correctness of the new way of life, and I felt this in my medical centre no less than any tractor-driver.

The struggle between the old and the new could be seen in every job, whether big or small, and life was going forward, leaving far behind that terrible day when they carried Repnin's half-dead body into our little hospital.

He had been wounded in the back by an explosive bullet. The hole where it had gone in was small, but the one where it had come out was large. Undoubtedly he would have died within the hour, from heavy loss of blood, if we hadn't managed to close the wound at once. Even so he seemed bound to die, but I fought against this inevitability stubbornly and to the utmost of my knowledge and strength.

The director's "Lizzie" drew up, puffing, outside my door, only towards noon that day when I had already got in touch with Salsk to ask for a surgeon. Muravyov asked about that first of all, and then I told him about my conversation with Repnin the previous night. We talked in whispers, falling silent and gazing anxiously into Danila Stepanich's face when he suddenly stopped breathing.... A second passed, then another, then a third.... I injected camphor. His breath, which had been gurgling inside his bare chest as though unable to find an outlet, broke out at last—and along with it our conversation was renewed.

Two facts were clear to me. The first was that the news which had shaken Danila Stepanich was connected with those cases of sabotage which I had seen with my own eyes. The second was that this news threw light on Maslov from an unexpected angle, for otherwise Repnin would not have come to me with his questions at half past three in the morning.

"What was this news?" the director asked, in a whisper.

"I don't know, Ivan Ivanich. Maslov was eavesdropping. He heard us."

Up till now I am sure that that was just how it had happened although during the investigation it became clear that already before the harvest began Repnin had been interesting himself in some suspicious cases of damage to machines, one of which occurred in his own team, and more than once he had publicly threatened to expose the saboteurs. He had enemies. In the spring he had insisted on the dismissal of an accountant who had turned out to be a former Whiteguard. Nezhelsky, a mechanic by whose fault large-scale break-down had occurred in the road team, had been demoted to driver and had taken to drink.

...It seemed to me that his pulse, which, moreover, was barely audible, was dying away, and his difficult breathing was passing into the death rattle. I asked Muravyov to leave, and from that moment began what cannot be rendered in the natural sequence of days, hours, and minutes. This sequence is to be found in "Case of the Illness of Repnin, D. S., 34, engineer," which I have kept. Everything which one is supposed to record in such cases can be found in it: anamnesis, objective data, day-to-day observations. In reality, however, this case-history was simply a passionate, intense, unremitting struggle to hold back a departing life.

This was repeated every day—life was passing away and we were restoring it. Again it drifted away and again clutching at every final, desperate chance, we restored it. "We" meant Dr. Drozdov, Dr. Pylnov (the surgeon from Salsk Hospital) and myself.

I had already given Danila Stepanich a blood transfusion before the doctors arrived. In those days this was far from being such a simple affair as it is now, when preserved blood is rushed by aeroplane to the remotest corners of the Soviet Union. The appropriate blood-group turned out to be my own, which made my task still more difficult, because from doctor I was transformed into blood-donor, and to assist me I only had Katya, who got excited and had to be shouted at. There were bright intervals, however, in this struggle, which was so crushing in its hopelessness. These were the interrogations. I call them bright, because everything that tormented me as I sat at Repnin's bedside—pity for him, and regret that his hopes would never be fulfilled, and the anger which made my heart sick—all found an outlet in these frank talks with people who were striving for one thing only: to discover the truth.

I recalled many facts, insignificant details which had lain hardly noticed in my mind but came back to me later. For instance, that Maslov had a disagreeable way of talking without raising his eyes, and that I could not get rid of the idea that he said one thing and thought something different. He was guilty: I had no evidence, but I was sure he was guilty.

The well-known Professor B. (he is famous today) came over from Rostov; a lame, thin man with a large head. When I was informing him of the patient's condition, my voice trembling from agitation and fatigue, he suddenly interrupted me, glancing tenderly at me from under his beetling brows.

"You're his wife?"

"No, professor."

"And I'd made up my mind you were his wife!"

All this time the idea had been weighing on my mind that an operation on the spinal column must be performed at once (Danila Stepanich's spine had been touched). His condition seemed so obviously hopeless that it was worth taking the risk.

"So obviously hopeless?" B. broke in disapprovingly. "And on what exactly do you base this obvious hopelessness?"

He said that it was natural that we should hesitate, as in cases of spine wounds the arguments for surgical intervention were controversial. He was himself, however, a supporter of the view that it was just surgical intervention that gave the best results in such cases.

"An immediate operation would clearly have been out of the question, when so much blood had been lost," he said. "Now, however, it's not merely possible, it's necessary."

Subsequently B. affirmed, as I learnt from a mutual acquaintance, that the operation which he performed at our farm was "mosaic work," and the most complicated part of it was what he "met on the way." I won't reproduce the details, which would interest only specialists, but will merely say that these details compelled B. to doubt his own favourable forecasts....

* * *

It was getting on towards evening on the day after B.'s departure. As I wiped Danila Stepanich's hands with eau-de-Cologne I suddenly felt his fingers quiver and feebly grasp mine.

A dark-coloured singlet had been thrown over the shade of the portable lamp, so that the light shouldn't disturb the patient. I threw back this singlet and looked at him. His eyes were open.

"Danila Stepanich!"

It was as though he was returning gropingly from somewhere far off, stumbling, recognizing with difficulty a long-abandoned world.

"Danila Stepanich, it's Tanya. Can you hear me?"

Silence.

"You were ill, but now you're getting better."

Silence.

"Do you remember what happened to you?"

Silence. But his thin, wan face with the sunken eyes, with the high, waxen brow, looked clearer and more intelligent with every passing moment....

Towards morning he was talking, and his first question, to my surprise, was about Nezhelsky, the mechanic who had been dismissed from his team.

"Where's Nezhelsky?"

"Whisper," I replied. "You mustn't raise your voice."

They had warned me that a conversation with Danila Stepanich would be extremely valuable for the investigation. "Question him carefully," they had said to me. "If it's at all possible, of course, given the state of his health."

"Why do you ask about Nezhelsky? Was it he who shot you?"

Danila Stepanich was silent.

"No," he replied distinctly. "But was I ... was I...."

I was frightened, so obvious was the effort with which he was striving in his mind to step across some void in his memory.

"It's all right," I said hurriedly. "You'll be well soon. Lie still and don't think about it."

He nodded and closed his eyes. Ten minutes passed.

"Does everyone know about this?" he asked suddenly.

"Know about what?"

"Why, that I ... that they shot me."

"Know? Why, a special commission has been five days at work in the farm."

"Five days? So long?"

Perhaps what he meant to say was—so I've been unconscious as long as that.

I patted his hand, which lay helplessly on the coverlet.

"Shall I get you some tea?"

"No. I must talk to them."

This talk took place several hours later. Danila Stepanich was excited, and it was impossible to persuade him to put it off, even to the next day.

...I never learnt the details of the affair, though it wasn't hard to guess some of them. Danila Stepanich had heard from Nezhelsky that Maslov was a saboteur, and not just a rank-and-file one but a leading one. Nezhelsky had come personally to Danila Stepanich and said that he "just couldn't stay quiet any longer," and that "it would be better even to be shot like a mad dog." Maslov evidently hadn't realized how observant this Nezhelsky was, for the facts which he passed on to Danila Stepanich at once incriminated Maslov.

What these facts were I don't know, nor do I know, either, whether they found out who shot Danila Stepanich. The rest of the investigation was carried on in Rostov, and later in Moscow. I may be mistaken, having nothing except some newspaper cuttings at my disposal, but it seems that, though he wasn't mentioned by name, Maslov's case formed part of the material in the well-known prosecution of the Industrial Party, who were tried at the end of 1930.

Anyway, Maslov's name ceased to be mentioned in the little farm hospital a lot sooner than it could have appeared in the newspaper report, for the patient began to get excited whenever anybody uttered the name in his hearing. Any reminder of Mashenka, however, produced a sort of transformation of Repnin's spirit—his depression and his dread of being left disabled went into the shade, disappeared, and his hope of happiness gleamed brightly.

This was soon after he had regained consciousness. I was reading aloud to him Alexander Fadeyev's interesting book, *The Rout*, and suddenly noticed that he wasn't listening, but was thinking about something else.

"Do you want to rest, Danila Stepanich?"

He shook his head.

"I was thinking.... They haven't sent you a new feldsher, have they?

"No."

"Perhaps it might be worth asking the Territorial Public Health Office if you could have Mashenka."

"Why, of course! Why didn't I think of that myself? Yes, indeed, I'll go to Salsk and speak to Drozdov about it," I said, though it would be a complicated business to transfer a feldsher from Anzersk Settlement to the Salsk District Public Health Service without very good reason.

"You'll write to her about it?"

"Without fail."

From then on we often talked about Masha, and though, of course, I couldn't record them on the "prescription sheet," these talks had a better effect on Danila Stepanich than any medicine.

## A CRUST OF BREAD

The work of my hospital declined during the harvest period, and I suddenly found I had so much free time that I could apply myself again to my luminous vibrios.

Already during the autumn I had succeeded in showing that they live, without causing harm to anybody, in the little river Okolitsa which traversed the farm from east to south. I introduced two cubic centimetres of my vibrio culture into a frog, and to the amusement of numerous bystanders it began to resemble those transparent stone frogs which are sold in the shops of the Ural Gems Trust. Each living tissue began to glow when I introduced my vibrio culture into it.

Why?

It was not the first time that, when I came up against a difficulty I felt I couldn't solve, I had looked through Pavel Petrovich Lebedev's lecture notes, which I had kept from those far-off times when Andrei and I had studied together in the little town of Lopakhin on the Tesma. When we finished school we asked the old doctor, as the whole town called Pavel Petrovich, to give us some lectures, and it was then that I heard for the first time about the antagonism between microbes, and about the genius Mechnikov who had proposed to utilize this antagonism to cure people of diseases. When I was at the Medical Institute I often looked at these notes, and always found something unexpected in them, something which went far beyond the limits of the textbooks and the conventional lecture-courses.

There was the time when, while I was studying active immunization against diphtheria under Zaozersky (in my fourth year), I stumbled in these notes upon an idea which helped me to cope with my first task of scientific research. But now.... No matter how many times I perused the pages of these three home-made note-books, I found nothing there about the luminosity of vibrios. Instead, inserted in the very earliest of the note-books, was one of the stories which Pavel Petrovich had told me a long time before, when I was still a child. I applied myself with interest to deciphering the clumsy, childish handwriting.

"And the night-watchman sent his daughter to the chemist's. The chemist will offer you the best mixtures and ointments. But you ask him for the medicine called 'the marvellous mould.'..."

I recalled to mind the old doctor's room. Under the table, on the window-sills, on the cupboard, everywhere lay medical journals and books. On one window-sill stood a microscope, and on the other, in an old, cracked glass, there always lay something mouldy—a piece of cheese or a crust of bread.

Why did Pavel Petrovich apply his mind to mould, which throughout the ages and amongst all peoples had aroused only aversion? He believed—this I remembered clearly—that ordinary green mould had curative powers. Now what if I were to carry out an experiment in my little laboratory? It was true that to hand and in unlimited quantity I had only one culture, the luminous vibrios. But why not find out what relationship there was between mould and these vibrios?

And mouldy pieces of bread and cheese made their appearance on my table, just as they used to lie about in Pavel Petrovich's room.

It was hard to arrange to be sent to Rostov, and harder still not to lose my way amongst the enormous quantity of writings about mould, but nevertheless, after sitting for a few days in the library of the Medical Institute, I came upon Takanayev's article which, so to speak, struck out at a tangent to my own work. Takanayev had established that old, no longer luminous colonies of vibrios began to glow again when mould fungi developed near them. He explained this on the grounds that these fungi are themselves the natural food of the vibrios which increases their luminosity.

While still in the train on my way home I thought of a very simple way of checking this explanation—to feed no-longer-luminous bacteria with dead, instead of live fungi. If Takanayev was right, their luminosity would be strengthened by the dead "food" just as by the living. He turned out to be wrong. The non-luminous colonies of vibrios did not glow anew, in spite of my associating them with a dead mould culture. The restoration of luminosity was connected, as I had thought, with some living process which went on in the organism of the fungus. This opinion was supported also by another circumstance, a very interesting one. The mould intensified the glow of the vibrios not only when in direct contact with them, but also when at some distance from them, both cultures, of course, being reared in the same nutrient medium. What could be deduced from this? One thing only, that it was not the mould itself that intensified the luminosity of the vibrios, but certain products of its vital activity which it excreted into the nutrient medium.

I prepared a three-week broth culture of mould, filtered it (that is, removed the mould, leaving in the broth only these unknown products) and added to the broth a culture of luminous vibrios. The glow was intensified. I took other quantities. The result was repeated. I repeated the experiment again and again, forecasting beforehand this or that intensity of luminosity, and never once made a mistake. I had not only happened to discover a new phenomenon, I had learnt how to regulate it. It was almost beyond belief!

This time I did not imagine I was dreaming, and did not rush by night, carrying the test-tubes in a pan, to show them to Dr. Drozdov (who happened to be in the farm), or sit up till morning fearing that the test-tubes would go out. I sat down to write an article about it, and mountains of scribbled-on paper, which I had torn up after writing on them, appeared in my room—on the table, under the table, on the window-sill, on the bed. Each phrase taken separately came by itself pell-mell, but to link them up . . . that was hard, almost physical work! And when I had at last finished this article, each page of which was written not in ink but, so to speak, in my blood, I tore it up, because it had occurred to me that I should try to "transfer" the glow from the cholera-like vibrios to the real cholera vibrios. . . .

One day, when autumn was already far advanced, I was sitting by Danila Stepanich and reading the *British Journal of Experimental Pathology*. Dr. Drozdov, having found me studying English, had sent me a few old numbers of this journal. The work progressed slowly, not only because I had to consult the dictionary every minute, but also for another and more important reason. In the pocket of my gown lay a letter from Andrei, in which he wrote that Masha had told him everything, which meant that he knew a hundred times more than I had written . . . and that he could not wait for the moment when he would see me again.

Danila Stepanich, who was working on a chess problem, put it aside and sighed heavily.

"What's the matter, Danila Stepanich?"

"Tell me, Tatyana, don't you think. . . . Please tell me frankly! Don't you think that my illness may have affected some brain centres?"

"That's a new one! Where do you get such ideas?"

Repnin sighed again and turned towards the wall without answering.

"Because I feel all the time that something is being kept from me," he said, after a pause. "And besides.... You won't be angry, Tatyana?"

"I promise you I won't."

He fixed his eyes gloomily on the ceiling.

"I didn't tell you before because I hoped it would pass, though usually I have a keen sense of smell, and if it weren't for the smell I shouldn't have thought that this was mould, exactly. But then I found that I began to have this idea precisely when you came into the room, and so it was clear that this was—an hallucination, only not an auditory one or a visual one but an olfactory one. I suppose there must be such things. And once hallucinations have appeared.... What's the matter?"

I was on the point of falling off my chair with laughter. He raised himself on his elbow and looked uneasily at me.

"It's not an hallucination, Danila Stepanich, I really do smell of mould. Katya mentioned it to me only yesterday. It's from some work I'm doing just now; I'm studying mould. Moulds come in different ways—one grows on damp brick, another on a piece of wood, a third on a broken flower-pot that's been thrown into the dust-hole. So I'm collecting such objects, and sometimes I carry them about with me. But I haven't anything on me at present." I turned out the pockets of my gown. "So it's one of two things: either I'm already stinking of mould through and through, or else you've developed something like a conditioned reflex."

"And why are you studying mould? Explain it to me, Tatyana; do you think I won't understand?"

"There's nothing to understand, it's so simple! Once there lived in a god-forsaken little town an old doctor who studied microbiology, the science of the life of microbes, to the best of his means and powers. His means then were small; a microscope, a couple of dozen test-tubes, and medical journals which he received from Moscow and Petrograd. He was very ill and very old already at that time when I, as a ten-year-old girl, first came to know him. He spent many years, twenty or thirty probably, writing his 'work' and for us children this work meant not only a thick manuscript with a lot of stubs of paper in it lying on his table, but also that he was constantly working on it, crossing things out and rewriting them. And sometimes he used to read us a page or two. And we. . . ."

"Who's this 'we'?"

"We. . . . Well, I mean, his nephew Andrei Lvov and I."

Danila Stepanich looked at me and raised his thick eyebrows, which had become particularly noticeable as his face grew wan.

"Oh, doctor, how you blushed!"

"I blushed? Not at all."

But in fact I not only blushed, I even, without the slightest need to do so, put my hand into the pocket of my gown, where Andrei's last letter lay.

"But anyway, how does mould come into it, Tatyana?"

"I'll explain. When we were growing up, Pavel Petrovich gave us some lectures. That was already after the Revolution, in 1922. I copied them down, all higgledy-piggledy, because I was then a silly girl who dreamt of becoming a great film-actress and not a country doctor. In these lectures he expressed the idea that mould, ordinary mould, possesses curative properties. So I've been trying to verify this idea, which at first sight seems so strange."

"And what's the outcome?"

"At present it's very hard to say."

"What did you say his name was? Lebedev? Was he known in the scientific world?"

"No."

"How's that?"

"Because his works weren't published. Besides, they were lost."

"Lost?"

"Yes, by accident they fell into the hands of a sharper. It's an involved story."

Not long before this conversation took place, I had written to Lena Bystrova to ask her to go and see the Procurator, and she had replied that she had been there, and had discovered that Rayevsky had been banished from Leningrad already in 1928 on account of some dirty business he was mixed up in. Pavel Petrovich's manuscript had not been found at his place, and the official whom she had seen at the Procurator's office had told her that there was little hope of any progress in that direction.

"But do you know, Tatyana, what he wrote about?"

"More or less."

"So you can tell people what was in his manuscript?"

"Nobody takes any notice of telling, Danila Stepanich. You've got to prove it, and that's not nearly so simple."

Repnin pondered.

"This is what I wanted to tell you, Tatyana," he said. "Should you need for your experiments a formerly healthy man, able to lift seventy-two pounds with his left hand, apply to Engineer Repnin, D. S., whose address you know."

I thanked him and said that Engineer Repnin, D. S., would be unsuitable as an experimental animal, being too restless a subject: one moment he was head over heels in love, then he was lying at the point of death, then he was worried that he was going mad....

## ABOUT LOVE

We hadn't seen each other for a long time, two years, two years in which everything in my heart seemed to have changed and become different. I sensed these changes only vaguely and felt the need to stop, to look around me and to ponder over the things that were happening to me. But I had no time to look around and when Andrei came I was somehow restless, unsure of myself, with my thoughts scattered.

He understood everything at once—he always understood me better than I did myself—and in half an hour I had forgotten the worry that I had changed, grown rougher and simpler and that the very sight of me would disappoint him. Yet this worry was replaced by another: I felt that this meeting of ours had been prepared by our entire youth; fright crept over me when I thought that after Leningrad we might, through my fault, have never met again; I was happy when he came, but somehow not in the way I thought I would be. Perhaps I had visualized this meeting too often? Perhaps I had thought of him too much and there was nothing surprising in this conflict between our real relations and what I pictured when with throbbing heart I closed my eyes?

Perhaps it was he and not I who had changed and this strange change was hampering me.

Then I forgot this, too, in the poignant tenderness that overcame me with ever-growing force.

The day after he arrived we registered our marriage in Salsk, and then went straight from the register-office to the railway station. We'd decided not to spend our honeymoon at a health resort, though the very best health resorts were close by, but to set off following our noses and put up wherever we might find ourselves, looking no farther ahead than the day. That was how we came to turn up at Korchevsk, a little town on the shores of the Sea of Azov, merely because Andrei wanted to see the Sivash. We discovered, however, that Korchevsk does not stand on the Sivash but on the strait joining the Sivash to the Sea of Azov, and the least interesting thing we saw in this pleasant, clean little town was precisely this strait, in which, for some reason I've forgotten, it was impossible even to bathe.

A sunburned and moustached fisherman sat on the sand, his legs tucked under him, beside an upturned boat. Andrei had decided, heaven knows why, that this fisherman had taken part in the heroic crossing of the Sivash during the Civil War, and started to cultivate him, plying him with questions to draw him out. The fisherman turned out to be a newcomer, however, from Berdyansk, and though, as we quickly learnt, he had taken part in the Civil War, it had been a modest part, as a cook.

"Is it far from here to Berdyansk?" Andrei asked.

"About a twenty-four hours' journey."

"By steamer?"

"Yes."

Andrei looked at me with enthusiasm in his face.

"Tanya, shall we go to Berdyansk? Yes?"

"Let's go."

"When does the steamer leave?"

"It left this morning."

"It's gone?" cried Andrei, as horrified as though he had been wanting all his life to go to Berdyansk. "Oh, hell, what rotten luck. But can't we go to Berdyansk by boat?"

I burst out laughing. Andrei gave me an angry look.

"By boat?" the fisherman repeated after him. "I don't know. Personally, I wouldn't take you in a boat."

"Why not?"

The fisherman pondered, grinning lazily into his whiskers.

"It's a ticklish idea," he said. "Got anything to smoke?"

Andrei gave him his cigarettes, and we went away, because I said that I wouldn't go by boat to Berdyansk, I'd be seasick.

Our tastiest course at lunch, which we had at a café, was some tomatoes, which were small, pink and exceptionally fragrant. Afterwards, wherever we went, I always asked for tomatoes like these. There was nobody in the café apart from ourselves.

... I had forgotten how Andrei's eyes shone when he began to talk about something with enthusiasm. When I thought about him I imagined him tired and pale, as I'd seen him in Leningrad. But now he had grown sunburned and gay, and he no longer seemed pensive, but radiated firmness, definiteness, directness. Everything about him had become somehow well-defined; even the untidy fair tuft of hair over his high brow had become straight and tall. And he laughed in a different way from before, so that all his white, even teeth showed. There seemed to be nothing in the world for him that could not be explained consistently and clearly. And yet behind this distinctness of the fully-formed man you would suddenly catch sight of the boy who, once upon a time, had drawn up a "lies chart" and ruthlessly exposed the confused relations obtaining between adults.

We talked about his future work: he had been offered an interesting job in Moscow, in the anti-epidemics department of the city health service.

"Actually, I've been thinking about this all my life." He stopped speaking, and I saw by his eyes that his mind was far away from me and our surroundings. "Or, to be more precise, ever since that day when they brought the Volga famine victims to Lopakhin and you and I 'roasted' coats and shirts over the stove. That was the first time I thought that I'd like, perhaps more than anything else, to go in for epidemiology, that is, to carry on the struggle against communal rather than individual misfortunes. I very much want to do a lot for people. What about you?"

"I'd be happy if I could do even a little."

"Our characters don't suit," Andrei replied dolefully, spreading his hands.

We went back to our hotel, looked into our room, found that it was very stuffy and that our suitcases were where they should be, and again set off to wander round Korchevsk, talking about what we would do the next day, because the present one was already drawing towards sunset.

Somewhere near Korchevsk was the famous animal reserve of Askania Nova. To reach Askania, however, we should need to go by train through Novo-Alexeyevsk and somehow I didn't want to travel by train. Having found the cabman (apparently he was the only one) we tried to persuade him to take us to Askania Nova. It became clear very soon that this was an absurd idea, for the distance to the reserve was not less than sixty miles, but we gave in only when the cabman, a little, hunchbacked, good-natured man, showed us his cab, in which it would be a wonder if he could take us to the station, let alone to Askania Nova. And so that evening, at about ten, we set out in this cab to the station, which was four miles out of town.

The evening was still but not close, and when we got out into the steppe it seemed as if all this had already happened before—the driver softly singing under his breath, the last glints of the sunset burning ahead of us, the red caps of the cotton-thistle blazing in the tall grass, and the little cab rolling, creaking, along the soft road.

The seat was uncomfortable and Andrei grasped me firmly round the waist. "You'll fall out," he said laughing, "and then it'll be like looking for the wind in the field."

...From somewhere far away he asked me, "Are you asleep?" I kissed him on the cheek, rested my head on his shoulder, and let a half-forgotten dream pass slowly before my eyes. There I was, going away somewhere with him, I didn't know with whom. With the man I loved. All around was silence, a gentle wind bent the grass and passed noiselessly over the steppe. Where were we going? Did it matter? If only the old coachman would keep on for a long time yet humming his long-drawn-out song and gentle little fountains of dust would keep on spurting from under his horse's hooves. If only the tall fragrant grass would keep on swimming past to the right and left of us, and the owls, blinking their blind eyes, sitting on telegraph poles. If only the light from the one headlamp which our driver had lit would keep on running with us along the smooth roadway. If only he would stay with me, the man I loved. But wasn't he with me?

Now he was bending down to settle the straw for our legs—it was too roomy in the cab and our legs dangled. Now, before straightening up, he was asking me, "Comfortable now, Tanyusha?" From above I saw his strong, pleasant face. Now he was talking about something, but stopped and just kissed me quietly, sensing that I didn't want to talk. In the twilight which drew nearer every minute over the hushed steppe he seemed so young, quite a boy, in his grey cap tipped on to the back of his head.

We had tickets only for unreserved seats and the carriage turned out to be a very odd one, with unusually wide, two-decker plank beds, on which one could lie comfortably but not sit. As against that it was almost empty—doubtless for this very reason!

The conductor lit the lamp and went away. Later somebody came and took a light from the lamp without noticing that we were sitting on the plank beds like Turks, with our legs doubled up under us. Then a woman came and undid a pocket handkerchief under the lamp, looked into it, counted her money, and went away, also without noticing us. It was a funny situation—as though we existed and yet didn't exist. Then the candle went out, but the carriage was none the darker for it, somehow....

"You can't imagine how you've changed."

"Have I changed?"

"Oh yes. You must realize, you didn't know yourself at all, that was very noticeable. For instance I remembered today how we went out into the country once when we were in Anzersk Settlement and you picked up a little boy and started playing with him and you said, 'One never knows what one will be doing in a minute's time.'"

"But do I know now?"

"You guess. Still, this hasn't stopped you sometimes pondering at length on what you'll be doing in a minute's time. On the whole, you're different. More decided ... and gentler."

"Are you glad I've grown different?"

Andrei found and kissed my hand in the darkness.

"What's Zaozersky written to you?"

"That he's told Academician Nikolsky about my luminous vibrios."

"And what did Nikolsky say?"

"That I'm doing fine."

"Are you asleep?"

"I'm not even thinking of it."

"Don't go to sleep, please. Or I shall go to sleep, too," said Andrei in a sleepy voice, "and we'll be carried off goodness knows where."

"You wanted it this way. And in May next year there's to be a conference in Moscow and Zaozersky has promised to include my paper on luminous vibrios in the agenda of one of the sections."

"What's that? And you never mentioned it to me."

"There wasn't time."

Andrei laughed.

"What's it called?"

"My paper? *On the Influence of Mould Fungi on the Luminosity of Bacteria.*"

"Shall I light the lamp?"

"No."

"Can I say I love you?"

"Yes."

We talked until at last I went off to sleep, resting my head on his broad palm.

... When we got to Askania we breakfasted on melons and white bread from a stall. It was so delicious that, forgetting myself, I licked my fingers, an action which I regretted because Andrei kept teasing me about it all the rest of the day.

The central building of the reservation was very attractive, being white, with a large porch. At the bottom of the yard stood the domestic offices, with roofs of white tiles, finished along the edges with tiles which, though also white, had patterns on them. Along the edge of the lawn in front of the central building grew some short, round trees with thick foliage, and all these things together produced an impression of cleanliness and cosiness.

"Wouldn't it be nice if they were to give us a room in this house," said Andrei, as he mounted the stairs.

"Why, it's just like in the story *The Three Wishes*," he said a quarter of an hour later, when the house manager had allotted us a small but bright room in this very house.

While we were still in the train he had recalled that the zoologists at Askania were trying to evolve a new breed of animal, the aurochs-bison, and he now set himself to explain to me all the intricacies of this task with such enthusiasm that he was still talking when, in order to change my dress, I pushed him out into the corridor.

But now we were walking in Askania park, and what a splendid, shady, spacious park it was! And what a delight it was to stroll through it with Andrei, as he talked about Askania interestingly and in detail, as though he had spent his whole life there.

"I've only read one book about it," Andrei replied, laughing, when I asked him with amazement how he knew, for instance, that the reservation was famous for the so-called "Large Enclosure" where animals lived in freedom. "And that was a children's book. Published by Detgiz."

But what about the research work carried on at Askania, which he described to me with full knowledge of what he was talking about, even though he gave me only the general outline of it—surely he couldn't have read about that in the Detgiz publication?

"Oh, that comes from another, more serious source. Kovshov worked here last year. Have you heard of Kovshov? An outstanding zoologist. Mitya told me a lot about him."

"I'm glad to hear you mention Mitya," I said evenly. "How is he?"

"I didn't meet him when I was in Moscow. He's in Yalta. Shall we go to Yalta from here?"

"That would be nice. I'd like very much to see him."

"Mother was by herself, so I only heard what she had to say about him. She was rather upset."

"Why?"

"For a number of reasons. For instance she thinks that he might sometimes go to bed earlier than three o'clock in the morning."

"He works a lot, then?"

"A tremendous lot."

"Is his wife with him?"

"Yes, unfortunately."

When Andrei was angry he used to squint slightly. He was squinting now, doubtless because I had mentioned Glafira Sergeyevna.

"He worries me a great deal," he said, with a sigh. "You see, he's intelligent, honest, talented. How can he not feel how cheap, how false she is? Why, she lies to him at every step. How can he not see that she's simply gambling on him as one gambles on a card?"

"He sees and feels and understands a thousand times more than you do."

"Do you think so? Then why. . . ."

"Because he loves her."

Andrei shrugged his shoulders.

"That isn't love, it's a disease of the will. To love a woman like that is to love the dark side of one's own soul, the side one ought to strip mercilessly and not merely to strip but to lance, using the most up-to-date antiseptic measures."

I remembered Glafira Sergeyevna as I had seen her, getting fat, with a heavy, sullen expression, and, sitting beside her, Kramov, polite, pale, wearing a very well-made suit under which I sensed narrow shoulders and thin legs.

"Andrei, I've wanted to tell you for a long time. . . . I want there to be nothing hidden between us, either in the present or in the past. Perhaps I ought to have told you this at once when I knew that you were in love with me."

I was silent. Then I began, "You remember?" And again I fell silent. I didn't feel excited in the least, yet for some reason it was hard for me to breathe.

"But now it's already become impossible. . . . Now, when I love you, too," I said, whispering because it was awkward and frightening to put into words what had happened and was happening in my heart. "Do you remember, when you left Leningrad last year, I found you at the railway station and said I didn't want you to go away without saying goodbye to me?"

Andrei nodded.

"I told you then, 'There's another reason, too, which I'll tell you about some day.'"

Andrei nodded again. His face was grave and he was listening to me without shifting his expectant, anxious gaze from mine.

"The reason is this," I went on, articulating each word with deliberate firmness, to the end. "At that time I was in love with Mitya. I know that the very day or minute when I felt I was in love I ought to have put everything else aside and gone to you wherever you were. Not to tell you that I loved you, for I didn't yet love you, but to explain what was happening to me. But not only didn't I do that, on the contrary, I was afraid all the time that you would come for me, and I didn't want you to and couldn't force myself to write even one word to you."

I forgot to mention that as we strolled in the park we had met a black-haired little boy in a skull-cap who was driving a herd of quaint, thick-legged ostriches somewhere, and we had asked him to show us the Large Enclosure, the part of the reservation where the animals live in freedom. The boy said that he couldn't but we coaxed him so warmly that at last he agreed, and after locking up his ostriches in a pen he led us through a gap in the fence into the Large Enclosure. Now he was walking behind us and wondering why we were paying no attention to the remarkable gnus and yaks.

"My own darling," said Andrei, in a voice that went straight to my heart. "Thank you for telling me this first. It was just my weakness to go away without even trying to find out whether it was true. I wandered along the embankment for three hours and, you may not believe it, but even now when I hear people talking about the beauty of Leningrad, I find myself thinking, yes, but what a cold, unfriendly, indifferent beauty it is! You understand it was very hard to write you a letter without letting you know that I had guessed."

"Guessed? Guessed what?"

"And here's the *saygak* antelope," said the boy, timidly, pointing to a queer-looking sheep with a large, funny nose, which was lying asleep on a mound, and as we drew near lazily rose to its feet, stood for a while, and then lay down again.

Andrei patted the boy on the head and laughed.

"Do you remember the note you sent to Mitya? When I went up to him at the Congress and asked after you, he showed it to me. You realize, I could take it any way I liked. More than once you'd mentioned some Army doctor with whom you used to go to Moscow Art Theatre performances. I was quite ready for the idea that you loved somebody else. But that this somebody else might be Mitya. . . . I don't know how to explain it to you. . . . When I thought about it I found it hard to breathe. . . . So I went back to Anzersk Settlement and waited for your letters. I read and re-read them endlessly. Often it seemed as if you were going to write about all this, but you never did. And then I started to write to you about how much I loved you. I fought for it as best I could; what else was left for me to do? I tried to understand you, to enter into your life. Only don't think this was all a thought-out plan. It just happened. It was happiness to love you, and I couldn't give it up."

A graceful, thin-legged creature, with ears thrown back, was hiding from the sun in the shade of the trees surrounding a pool. The boy turned back, no doubt wanting to tell us about this animal, but stopped, seeing that I was putting my arms around Andrei.

"Wait a minute, I want to finish telling you. . . ."

But I wasn't listening any more and only kissed him with my heart standing still.

* * *

We didn't go on to Yalta, we returned to the farm, and that was a good thing, for it turned out that not only colleagues but also people whom I hardly knew were annoyed that we had the wedding "miles away," as Repnin said to me reproachfully, instead of at home. I hastened to see Repnin the same day that we arrived back, as I found a letter from Masha waiting for me at the farm. She thanked me for the trouble I'd taken in speaking to the Salsk District Public Health Office about her. "It's not hard to guess who's behind this, though," she wrote, "for Danila Stepanich writes to me very often and is always urging me to move to Salsk. I should be glad to stay with Mother, too, as she's getting very old now, but who would release me from Anzersk Settlement?"

I was struck by the almost timid way in which Danila Stepanich asked permission to read the letter for himself.

"So, she'd be glad?" he said with a quiver in his voice. "Well, she shall be glad!"

I started to say that the affair might hang fire in Rostov for a long time. He listened and nodded his head submissively.

"I'll carry her off," he said suddenly, in a calm voice. "Territorial Public Health Department, City Public Health Department, they permit, they don't permit . . . I'll send the lot of them sprawling!"

Then, stopping for a second, he began to scold me again for not having held the wedding celebration on the farm. It was in vain that I assured him there had not been any celebration.

"Well, all right, we'll celebrate it now," said Danila Stepanich, and towards evening, when Andrei and I were peacefully drinking tea, and discussing the complicated question of how to conduct our home life when separated from each other by twelve hundred miles, noisy voices were heard on the stairs, the door was flung open, and in came the director, Repnin, Borodulin and Katya. Later on, Klava

Borisova turned up, and some others as well, and we found that my little room could hold twelve visitors; true, not very comfortably. There was no need to worry about refreshments; the guests had arrived with gifts which they had just obtained at the Central Workers' Co-operative, this being a year when products were distributed according to norms. The farm gardener, however, disregarding norms, had given each of our visitors flowers, so that we had to fetch a pail from the medical centre in order to place all these magnificent luxuriant dahlias and asters in water.

After knocking on his plate with his knife, Repnin stood up, and as I looked into his serious, emotion-filled face I thought, "Yes, you'll carry her off! You'll send them sprawling!"

"Personally, comrades," he began, "I have never doubted that life is a fine thing. Recently I've had two opportunities of testing this idea, as it were, in practice. The first was when they tried to remove me from this fine life. And the second was just lately, when I happened to learn, only in broad outline, of course, the story of a certain love-affair. This story shows that if love is true and deep it is able to break down all obstacles to win the scope it needs. . . ."

He was talking about us, about Andrei and me, yet in every word there echoed:

"She will come! She will come!"

"That's why I wish good health to our Tatyana Petrovna with all my heart," Repnin went on, then stopped for a moment to check the quivering of his lips. "As for our dear guest, Andrei Dmitrich, I can only say this—may he keep in mind that what has been dearly won must be preserved and looked after with especial care. We must presume, of course, that he knows Tatyana Petrovna better than we do. But as she is, so to speak, the daughter of our farm, it's our duty—don't you agree, comrades?—to give him that warning."

That evening hosts and guests together went to the cinema, which was an open-air one with an unlimited number of seats and a little crescent moon hanging beneath its starry roof. The picture was new to us: *The End of St. Petersburg*.

Far away, beyond the repair workshops, a reaped field was being burnt, strips of smoke crept along the ground, and amidst them, suddenly flaring up, red fiery shapes scattered sparks in all directions. From time to time the light screen trembled in the wind that blew in from the steppe, and then it would seem as though Andrei and I were sailing along. Whither? Did it matter?

"And there's a moth," he whispered, as though he had just been expecting this moth, which flickered in the transparent cone of light pouring from the aperture of the projector on to the sheet used as a screen. I glanced at Andrei. He wasn't watching the screen. It was obvious that all this, the cinema under the open sky, the people sitting intent-faced on the grass, and the fact that they were burning a reaped field, interested him more than what was on the screen.

Suddenly he turned to me.

"What is it, Andrei?"

"Tanya," he formed my name with his lips alone. "I can't live without you."

"We'll soon see each other again."

"Soon? After a thousand years! Oh, how hard it is to leave you!"

## Chapter II

## SEVERAL YEARS

### THE FIRST DAY

The cloakroom attendant said that Nikolai Vasilyevich Zaozersky never arrived before twelve, but since he had arranged to see me at a quarter to ten I could expect him towards eleven. I took off my coat and overshoes. I didn't want to remove my hat because I'd spent a lot of trouble putting it on, but the cloakroom man asked, "And your hat?"—and it went after the rest.

"Perhaps you'd like to wait in the lounge? There are some papers there."

I answered that I'd wait in the hall. As a matter of fact it wasn't a proper hall, but a little room with an inside staircase. I'd seen a room like it in the scientist's sanatorium in Old Peterhof; but this one at the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes was cosier. There was a carpet on the stairs, and portraits of Mechnikov and Bach* hung on the walls.

I took a seat, pondered and worried about what was going to happen. It was worth thinking, too, about what had happened; at least about what had happened in the last few days.

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* Academician A. N. Bach (1857-1946), founder of Soviet biochemistry.

First and foremost, I was in Moscow! This was something which decisively affected all other events, big and small, so that it was difficult or even almost impossible to think of them apart from it.

Secondly, I had read a paper on luminous vibrios at one of the sections of the All-Union Conference of Microbiologists, and apparently it had been a success.

Thirdly, Mitya had introduced me to Academician Nikolsky, who had said in a kindly way, pausing after each word:

"And I was just going to ask about the schoolgirl who attended our dreary meetings so regularly."

Nikolai Lvovich Nikolsky was a famous scientist, a friend of Mechnikov's and one of the founders of Russian microbiology.

Fourthly, Andrei was moving to Moscow! We would see each other soon and stay together for a long time; not as it had been in December, when he had spent such a few days with me and then gone back to Moscow, where the question of his transfer was being decided.

The door banged every minute. People working at the Institute came in, their faces frozen red, exclaimed, "What a frost!" and stamped their feet on the threshold. They were "Moscovites," calm, assured, and I, who had grown out of the ways of big cities during the last three years, felt myself somehow on my guard and constrained. The best dressmaker in Salsk had persuaded me to have a dress made with large frills, which nobody had worn yet, and this prophetic gift now positively poisoned life for me. One of the girls working at the Institute, a pretty thing with luxuriant hair, went up to the mirror which stood in the hall and, while chatting with another girl, nonchalantly made up her lips. It was stupid, of course, but when she had gone away I went up to the mirror, too, and there I saw.... But what could I see there other than a very ordinary woman of average height, dark-complexioned, wearing an unbecoming dress, with hands which were sunburnt although it was already mid-winter, and a weather-beaten face anxious with expectation?

At last I got tired of waiting. I went up the stairs and found myself in a gallery which ran along the first-floor landing. Which way should I go, right or left? I chose to go left, because from that direction a venerable man in pince-nez and a white gown was approaching me.

"Excuse me.... I'm Dr. Vlasenkova. Nikolai Vasilyevich arranged for me to come at ten, but he hasn't arrived yet. May I look round the Institute? If that's all right, of course."

"Please do, doctor."

I expected him to introduce me to some young colleague who would show me round the Institute, but he accompanied me himself. We looked into the attractive study of the Institute's director, Valentin Sergeyevich Kramov, then into one of the laboratories, and Ilya Terentich, as my new acquaintance was called, gave me a general account of the work done in this laboratory. Then we began to encounter colleagues of his, and now I was finally convinced of my good luck. Hardly any of them failed to stop and chat with Ilya Terentich about his affairs and his health. But he, too, was obviously just as solicitous in his attitude to them. In one laboratory he carefully removed an ash-tray from a table and shook it out in an urn in the corridor. In another, grunting as he did so, he wiped with a duster the glass door of a cupboard which was bespattered with something white.

We walked back to the gallery, and I was just going to say good-bye to Ilya Terentich and thank him when the door banged down below and in came Zaozersky, his fur-coat flung wide open, his stick in one hand and his brief-case in the other. The fur-coat was heavy, being made of polecat's fur, with tails. He took a few steps forward, stopped, drew his breath noisily and started to take off his coat. Suddenly—I could hardly believe my eyes—my companion ran downstairs as fast as he could go, took

Nikolai Vasilyevich's coat from him and carried it off to the cloakroom.

"Thanks, Terentich! What a swine of a coat it is. See if I don't go to the market tomorrow and sell it. Ah, Tanya! Hullo."

We went to Nikolai Vasilyevich's study and after a few minutes I asked, as though casually, which department Ilya Terentich worked in.

"Terentich? He's our attendant. A remarkable man; you'll soon see that for yourself."

* * *

Nikolai Vasilyevich regarded me, and quite rightly, as his own pupil, and had hoped that I would come to work at the Institute of Epidemiology which he had been heading during the last few years. But it was not for nothing that I had been carrying around in my handbag for the last three months at least a clipping from *Izvestia*: "The Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes requires an experienced bacteriologist." All my scientific interests had led me to precisely that Institute or, to be more exact, to that field of knowledge, for the Institute itself had been opened only two or three years previously. That was why, when I replied to Nikolai Vasilyevich's letter informing me that my paper had been included in the conference agenda, I had sent him this clipping and asked for a testimonial from him, a competition for the vacant appointment having been announced.

Even Andrei thought this move strange, a move I had only decided on after long doubts. "You're throwing your teacher over and you're asking him to support you in transferring to somebody else?" he wrote. But I knew Nikolai Vasilyevich's largeness of heart and was fairly sure that he would not be angry with me. And so it turned out. The matter was made easier by the fact that Nikolai Vasilyevich was consultant to the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes, and promised to supervise my work.

"Well, shall we go to see the director, Tanya?" he asked, grinning and tugging his beard. "Frightened?"

"No, I'm not one of the timid ones, you know."

"I'm not one of the timid ones either. But when I see his glittering eyes I feel like saying, 'May the power of the Cross be with us!' "

Putting on a serious, care-ridden manner, he went with me to see the director who, as Ilya Terentich informed us, had only just arrived.

I had seen Kramov a few days previously, at the conference. That was only a meeting of a moment, however; he had said a few kind words to me and gone away. It was quite different now, when, as he took my hand in his little one, almost like a child's, with its weak fingers, Kramov looked at me attentively. . . . Quite different!

"Welcome, Tatyana Petrovna! As they say, you've come at a good moment, yes, a good moment. Nikolai Vasilyevich, you haven't introduced Tatyana Petrovna to Lavrov yet, have you?"

"No."

"Oh, that'll be for me to do, then," said Kramov, sounding as though this would be an unheard-of pleasure for him. "But first of all we'll have a talk, eh?"

"Yes, you two talk and I'll be off," said Nikolai Vasilyevich.

"Are you going already? And I was hoping you would help me, as it were, to go into Tatyana Petrovna's scientific biography."

"There's nothing special in that biography," said Nikolai Vasilyevich with sudden annoyance. "She's an able person, that's all there is to be said."

His face had darkened as soon as we had entered the room, and he was now scowling so much like a child that though I was nervous, I could hardly keep myself from smiling.

Kramov went to the door with him and came back to me.

"I read your testimonials, Tatyana Petrovna," he began, motioning me to sit down and himself settling into a comfortable and handsome arm-chair. "I heard the paper which you read at the Congress, too, and I must confess that I was amazed. . . ."

That was his way—to break off in the middle of a sentence and then to conclude it quite differently from how the person he was talking to expected. At that time I was not familiar with these disagreeable ways of Kramov's and naively supposed that he had been amazed by the importance of my discovery for Soviet science.

"I was amazed that you had managed to do such exact work in a country practice."

I replied that there was nothing special about that, as the State Farm where I worked had a good laboratory at its disposal. This was only half true; but I had not liked Kramov's amazement concerning a country practice.

"I think you have a rewarding subject. But, Tatyana Petrovna, don't you think that the reaction you obtained is caused by the action of alkali on luminous bacteria? For luminous bacteria, you see, as indeed for many others, an acidic reaction of the environment is disagreeable, whereas with an alkaline reaction it's the reverse."

And in a couple of minutes Kramov sketched a plan for a series of experiments which could test this idea. I asked his permission to take notes, as all this was completely new to me. He kindly handed me pencil and paper.

"If I'm not mistaken, you studied under Nikolai Vasilyevich in Leningrad?"

"Yes."

I gave him a very brief account of my work on the diphtheria bacillus, mentioning, I forget in what connection, that Rubakin had worked in the same department with me.

"Ah, Pyotr Nikolayevich?" said Kramov, with animation. "So you know him?"

"I've known him since I was a student."

"He's working at our Institute now, you know."

"Yes. I looked for him at the conference, but they told me he was ill."

"He had the 'flu. But he's back at work now."

This was said in a meaning tone which surprised me.

"You haven't seen each other yet?"

"No."

"Be sure to call on him."

Evidently, tousled, good-natured Petya Rubakin, whom, in my Leningrad days, one could rouse from bed at night in order to find out how a true diphtheria bacillus differs from a false one, was in Kramov's eyes somebody quite different and much bigger than in mine!

Chatting, we went down to the ground floor, which was much more modest than the first floor, and made our way by a narrow, cement-floored corridor to a small laboratory. A tall man of about forty-five was crouching over a microscope at the table. He was strongly-built, bony, with a head as bald as a piece of ivory.

Kramov greeted him very politely, but with a subtle nuance of condescension in his voice which not only did not mar his politeness, but somehow emphasized it; this was another of his ways.

"Let me introduce you, Tatyana Petrovna—Vasily Fyodorovich Lavrov."

The tall man bowed.

"Don't complain any more, Vasily Fyodorovich, that in the laboratory you feel as though you're in a dense forest. The road is easier to find when you have a companion. For my part, I can assure you that in the person of Tatyana Petrovna you are acquiring an assistant with an inestimable practical record."

He went off, his head held high, his pince-nez gleaming, placing his feet firmly, and I was left with Lavrov, who seemed even more embarrassed than I was.

I don't recall the details of our conversation, which must have gone on for at least an hour, but I do recall, and that very clearly, the impression I received of Lavrov's avid attention as he questioned me and listened to my replies. We did not talk about research ("there'll be time for that," he said with a kindly smile) but began with my work on the State Farm, then went back to my Institute years. I mentioned Pavel Petrovich, who had aroused my interest in microbiology, and Lavrov said that he had not only heard of Dr. Lebedev, but remembered his pamphlet, *Protective Forces of the Organism*, which had been published in 1922.

"But wasn't it a sort of philosophy of microbiology?" he asked.

It seemed to me at first a little strange that this attentive man with the white, slender hands of an experimenter, which one remembered from first sight, should question me in such detail about the organization of the medical centre of a State Farm, and not only question me but be so sincerely amazed at what to me seemed so ordinary. Later I realized that for Lavrov I was not only a new person at the Institute, but to some extent a representative of that immense new thing which was happening in the life of our country.

Lavrov fixed his eyes on me thoughtfully.

"I've been thinking about your vibrios," he said. "In what direction do you intend continuing your work?"

"I want to find out the cause of the luminosity. And if it won't work out...."

On the way from Rostov to Moscow I had made the acquaintance of an engineer who talked interestingly about the production of electric lamps, and it had struck me that my vibrios might serve as a fair indicator of the pumping of air out of these bulbs, for lack of oxygen compelled them to cease glowing. I mentioned this to Lavrov. He shook his head doubtfully.

"I don't think Valentin Sergeyevich would approve of an idea like that," he said. "He's no supporter of that kind of utilitarian approach. Well, now let me show you our lab, Tatyana Petrovna. The equipment isn't up to much, goodness knows. But everything's ahead of us."

The equipment really was mediocre, especially if one compared it with that of the laboratories on the first floor which Ilya Terentich had shown me. After my installations on the State Farm, however, where nearly everything had been made with my own hands, Lavrov's laboratory seemed to me something like a palace of science.

* * *

There are people who not only don't get any older but even, in a way, get younger as the years go by. Just such a person, ruddy-complexioned, round-faced, tousled-haired as he was when we parted in Leningrad, was Petya Rubakin, whom I saw now sitting at a table and looking into a microscope. With his left hand—he was left-handed—he was drawing something rapidly on a sheet of paper lying in front of him. I exchanged greetings with his colleagues but he did not stir. I cleared my throat and he did the same, but not in mimicry of me, just mechanically. At last one of his colleagues said in a loud voice:

"Pyotr Nikolayevich, it's someone to see you."

With his left eye still screwed up, Rubakin raised his head and looked at me.

"Tanya!" he exclaimed, with surprise. "You here?"

"To see you, Pyotr Nikolayevich," I replied, feeling how rapidly the cold tension in which I had thought, spoken, and even walked all through that day vanished at the sound of that familiar, mocking voice. "And to stay, too. You won't drive me away, will you?"

"Don't talk rot! We'll shift up and make room for you. But how you've grown, doctor. You haven't lost any time."

I laughed. I was glad to see Rubakin, for I liked him.

"So you're the 'girl from the State Farm.' I was ill in bed and Lavrov came to see me, looking so fed-up, and he said, 'The competition for the appointment has brought us a girl from a State Farm.' I asked him, 'Doesn't it suit you that she's from a State Farm?' And he answered, 'It doesn't suit me that she's a girl. I should have preferred a man.'"

"I'm married, by the way."

"Go on!" Pyotr Nikolayevich looked at me with respect. "Devil knows how this happens to people," he said, with sincere regret in his voice. "They get married. Many even have children. All that seems damned complicated to me."

I forgot to mention that Rubakin had by then introduced me to his colleagues. One of these, a tall, fair young man, laughed softly when he heard this avowal.

"It's nothing to laugh at, Victor," said Rubakin edifyingly. "You are still a student and haven't matured to the understanding of such things. Let's leave these unintelligent people, Tanya! Now here, as you see," and he opened a door which led into an adjoining room, very small and a good half of it occupied by a large white cupboard, "is my study. Please don't make fun of it. Sit down and tell me everything. After all, we haven't seen each other for four years."

"Three. But what is there to tell you? I've been working, that's all. I even thought I'd learnt something. But now that I've spent half a day at your place I see I'll have to study everything from the beginning again."

"What do you mean by 'everything'?"

"Why, just everything in the world. Will you help me?"

"Of course I will."

"Does Nikolai Vasilyevich often come to the Institute?" When I entered my fifth year Rubakin had already been one of Nikolai Vasilyevich Zaozersky's assistants. He was 26 or 27 then.

"Nikolai Vasilyevich? Very rarely. First of all, he has another institute on his hands. And secondly, in Leningrad he had more time to devote to research."

"Meaning?"

"There is in existence a thing called the Society of Naturalists, attached to the University of Moscow. You've heard of it I expect, doctor?"

"No."

Rubakin grinned, and his round intelligent face with its characteristic upward-flying brows took on an ironical expression.

"A mighty citadel of Vitalism," he said. "A citadel, in fact, in which the windows and doors are hermetically sealed, because the naturalists hope that in this very simple way they can fence themselves off from the encroachments of a certain monster called dialectical materialism. Well now, Nikolai Vasilyevich stands before the iron gates of this citadel and calls out, 'Get to know things! Read!' But from inside they reply, 'We don't want to!' Under these circumstances you'd hardly expect him to find the time for research, would you, doctor? All the more as, sitting in that citadel, are men of his own generation, and amongst them some notable scientists."

"Microbiologists?"

"Of course. It's just the microbiology section that I have in mind, not the Society as a whole. What goes on in the other sections I don't know! I fancy it's the same."

"One more question. What kind of man is Kramov?"

Rubakin's face became serious.

"Well, that's a long story," he said, twisting a lock of hair round his finger and pulling at it with a sort of thoughtfully angry expression. "As a matter of fact, we have much to talk about generally, doctor. Where do you live?"

"Nowhere, at present. The head of the Salsk City Public Health Service gave me a letter to his sister to ask her to put me up. She has a couple of rooms in the Arbat."

"Have you gone through the formalities here?"

"Not yet. Nikolai Vasilyevich introduced me to the director and the director to Lavrov."

"Well, now I'll introduce you to Kochergin, the deputy director who's in charge of our administrative department. He'll see to the formalities. Shall we go? What about it, doctor? So you're going to learn everything afresh, are you?"

## FIRST STEPS: CITADEL OF VITALISM

The Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes was housed in a small grey building on the Leningrad Highway, behind a cement-covered yard with a high cast-iron railing in front of it. It comprised only nine laboratories in all; and that was as it should be in an institute which undertook exclusively theoretical tasks, so Valentin Sergeyevich Kramov thought and frequently asserted.

The Institute was a model of orderliness in all respects: in the punctuality with which work began and ended, in the regularity of the interventions of Institute workers at the monthly scientific conferences, in the subordination which was punctiliously observed amongst them. The laboratories were scrupulously tidy; the furniture was cleaned every day and the carpets shaken every week. The furniture and carpets in question, by the way, were magnificent, and it was not without justification that Rubakin joked that the Institute was furnished better than it was equipped. The leading laboratories, however—Krupensky's, Dogadov's and Valentin Sergeyevich's own—were exceedingly well equipped, as well as furnished and carpeted.

Our first year in Moscow was a very difficult, restless and troublesome year for us. Pavlik was born while we were still living with Dr. Drozdov's sister. Soon afterwards we got a room, in the same street, the Arbat, and there we managed to live after a fashion, but only after a fashion, for the room was small and expensive. The last-mentioned circumstance was a very serious one for us at that time. Agnia Petrovna moved in with us, and this also gave rise to worries. I would have preferred to spend the first years of family life without the presence of "ancestors," as Andrei put it one day, evidently meaning his mother, since besides her and my father, of whom I had heard nothing for many years now, we had no other "ancestors." I was a little afraid of Agnia Petrovna at first, though quite without justification. She was no longer that resolute mistress of the house whom I had known, business-like though also easily driven to despair, able to behave confidently and calmly in difficult circumstances. Nowadays one sometimes noticed something pitiful behind the proud expression of her aging face, her square, straight shoulders, and even her pince-nez which would suddenly drop off and dangle at the end of their old-fashioned silk ribbon It had been there since the time when, having moved to Moscow, she had given up working. She never said a word about how she had lived at Mitya's. I can't say she fully approved of everything that went on in our household; indeed, she was obviously not very satisfied with her daughter-in-law. There was always a sort of distance between us which I could not cross, a survival from those far-off times when I was a little ragged girl from the tenements and Agnia Petrovna was the manageress of the "depot" which had so much impressed me. What did this distance matter, however, when there arrived in our home a pink citizen, previously unknown to anyone, who changed from day to day and already began to recognize his Granny (or, at any rate, so she emphatically claimed); who had to be fed every three hours, weighed and given sugar-water to drink; to whom all our friends and acquaintances presented vests, jackets and rattles; and who every evening had to be bathed. For his Granny this was the major event of the day.

Agnia Petrovna was happy about the birth of her grandson. Her happiness, true, did not prevent her expressing, more frequently than I'd have liked, her disapproval of present-day methods of bringing up children. Without making any retort, however, I carried on in my own way, and she would fall silent, her head haughtily held high.

Our worries and problems increased with every day that went by. The mere fact of having transferred from a State Farm to a research institute meant difficulties for me, for a number of reasons. I had been a practising doctor, who in the morning held a surgery at the medical centre; in the afternoon, having put the appropriate publications in my brief-case, went to give a lecture to the MTS on sanitary hygiene; and in the evening usually went to the collective farm which was under our patronage to supervise the work of the crèche, to exhort the sanitary squad or to hold another surgery. I had been needed, every day and every hour, and my awareness of this had given colour and warmth to my work.

At the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes, however, everything was different: both the work, which I found somewhat bewildering, and the people, amongst whom complicated relationships prevailed which were not clear to me. It would be wrong to say I lost my head. But after the first scientific conference I attended, at which Assistant-Professor Dogadov spoke with a brilliance which astonished me, I decided that my meagre experience of scientific work simply did not entitle me to be among these highly-educated people, who referred in their contributions to dozens of foreign names. It was by a miracle that I had managed to enter the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes; and it would have been better, I thought, if this miracle had never happened, for not more than two or three months would pass before my ignorance would be revealed to all. I must learn! But who, in this splendid Institute, would teach me? Down to the time when Pavlik was born I hadn't got anywhere; not only had I not found my place in the general framework of the Institute's activity, I had not even grasped what this activity essentially consisted of.

It was with a sense of depression that I went off on my maternity leave, and when I returned I began to study the ABC of laboratory work.

* * *

Pavlik was three months old. He was not weaned yet, and so I could not be away from home for long. The meeting had been fixed for eight o'clock.

After a stormy discussion, during which Agnia Petrovna had thrown out sharp hints that in her day "a mother was a mother" and that "if you're not willing to feed it you shouldn't give birth to it," we agreed that I should come back towards ten, feed Pavlik, and then go out again. It was impossible to cut the annual meeting of the microbiology section of the Moscow Society of Naturalists, at which, it had been resolved, battle was to be given to Professor Korovin and his supporters.

We went on foot. It was not far from the Arbat to the Mokhovaya, where the meeting was to be held in the lecture-hall of the Institute of Anatomy. After the thaw had come a frost, and thin ice crackled in the puddles under our feet. Andrei joked that I needed my fur-coat not because the weather was cold, it wasn't, but because, since I had bought it, the only thing to do was to wear it. He himself was "cold-proof," as Dr. Drozdov's sister said one day, and went about in the winter without a cap or scarf, wearing his autumn coat.

"Proof or not, your nose has gone red, though!"

He laughed and gave me a quick kiss on the cheek.

"In the Arbat!"

"Well, what of it? Nobody noticed."

"That militiaman was laughing at us. . . ."

"Who cares about him!"

Never before had naturalists attended a meeting of the Society in such numbers. Several queues formed in the cloakroom, and wherever one looked people one knew were standing with their coats over their arms. I already knew quite a lot of people in Moscow. The student working in Rubakin's laboratory, whose name was Victor Merzlyakov, hailed me and winked just like a small boy, evidently giving me to understand that the "Korovinites" need expect no mercy from him, anyway. Then up came Rubakin himself, pink-cheeked as a child and wearing a new suit which made him look even shorter than he was. This was our first meeting in the past three months in which he failed to ask after Pavlik. He was very interested in Pavlik, and used to say that he was observing our family life "with the aim of finding out how it develops under conditions of natural science." Today, however, he was not concerned about our family life.

"Andrei Dmitrich, I think it's not advisable for you to speak," he said quietly. "After all, you are new here."

"Very well."

"Still, we'll see."

Dogadov, from our Institute, was standing in a queue parallel to ours. I nodded to him and turned my eyes away, as I did not know him very well. But something forced me to look in his direction again—not at him but at somebody's very familiar hair and forehead which I had glimpsed over his shoulder.

"Lena!"

"Tanya! You in Moscow?"

My galoshes in one hand and my fur-coat in the other, I rushed across to speak to Lena Bystrova.

"I've been here a long time. What about you?"

"Nearly six months."

"Where are you working?"

"At the Botkin Hospital. And you?"

People were staring at us and laughing, but we couldn't move to one side because while we were chatting we were moving nearer to the place where coats were handed in.

"And what others from our Institute are in Moscow?"

"Lots! Mashka!"

"Mashka, too?"

"Why do you laugh?" asked Lena and laughed herself. Perhaps it struck her, too, as funny that pretty Mashka Kolomeitseva, who had dreamt only of a happy marriage, was also in Moscow.

"And is Olya Tropinina here?"

"She came only a little while ago. Oh, if only I'd known you were here!"

Andrei exclaimed, "Tanya, get in the queue!"

I gave him my galoshes and fur-coat and turned back to Lena.

"Is that your husband?"

"Yes."

"He seems nice," said Lena, a gay smile suddenly lighting up her pale face with the wide-set eyes.

"What about you?"

"Oh, I'm an old maid."

I laughed. The way Lena had answered me, without pausing to think, and the way she glanced around her with the jaunty air characteristic of her were so familiar.

"How glad I am to have run into you, Lenochka, dear. When shall we see you?"

"Well, just wait a bit and we'll hand in our coats, then we'll find seats together and talk."

Andrei came up. I introduced him to Lena, and he said that he knew her very well indeed from stories I'd told him.

"But I imagined you looking different."

"Beautiful, perhaps?"

"Older."

"No, I'm as I am. Not any older."

All the time while Professor Zebode was reading his paper—he was a long, mournful-looking man with his hair parted in the middle, who had a queer trick of opening his eyes wide suddenly, without any reason and as though terrified—Lena and I were talking; not about ourselves, that we had put off till the next day, but about what was to happen at the meeting. All that I said about myself was that I must return home towards ten o'clock for a short time.

"Why?" Lena asked.

I explained, and with a thoughtful expression she kissed me.

"How glad I am that things have turned out so well for you! Ah well, I ought to fall in love, oughtn't I?"

From our places in the gallery, where we had gone so as to be able to talk without disturbing anybody, we could see the whole of the hall, with its rows of seats rising steeply one above the other, and Lena asked me to tell her about the Moscow people who were present. She still looked on herself as a Leningrad girl.

I divided the scientists who were gathered that day in the lecture-hall of the Institute of Anatomy into broad categories, which made replying to Lena's many questions easier. The basis of my classification was a single feature —attitude to "the new things," that is to those deep-going changes in life, work and thought which were going on in the Soviet land. From amongst the scientists, old and young, experienced men and beginners, unknown ones and famous ones, numbering in all at least two hundred, I selected, however, only those who had a very definite attitude on the question. Such a man for example was Professor Korovin, who had been Director of Medical Services of the White Army. They said of him that when the Wrangelites were fleeing from Yalta he came off the last boat, within ten minutes of its departure. An experienced scientist, able to see the practical aspect of laboratory research, he was one of the outstanding consultants of the People's Commissariat of Health. Having arrived at the Commissariat one day, however, to attend some important meeting, and hearing that the lift wasn't working, he sat back in his horse-cab (there were still horse-cabs about then) and went home. In the microbiology section of the Society of Naturalists he took up an "extreme Right" position. In particular, he categorically refused to change those points in the Rules according to which any questions concerning organization were to be decided by secret ballot behind closed doors. He also and in particular obstructed papers by young scientists, especially those in which the authors strove toward a materialistic understanding of nature. Not in vain had Rubakin called the Society "a citadel of Vitalism"!

Stout even to the point of grossness, with short grey hair and resolute gestures which struck one by their definiteness. Korovin was sitting, his brows knitted, at the Presidium table (he was the chairman of the meeting). It was obvious that the pedantic speaker was getting on his nerves, as he was on mine, too.

The other category, a somewhat wider one, was that of the "Lefts," and the most clear-cut figure in this group of scientists was, of course, "Grandad," as everyone called Academician Nikolsky, one of the founders of the Soviet public health service. Other "Lefts," such as Ignatovich (who was sitting in the first row below us, and from above was visible only as a bald head and a foot swinging rhythmically, evidently beating time to some tune), had formerly been connected with *Zemstvo* circles. They were people of the kind who, in Lenin's words, were coming to communism "in their own way": "*not* as the underground propagandist or the man of letters came, but *through the findings of their own science.*" Amongst the "Lefts," however, there were also empty people, who prided themselves on the fact that they had never belonged to so-called liberal academic circles. Such a one was Diligentov. I pointed out to Lena this tall, lean old man with a thin face and greying, wedge-shaped beard; he was a lover of pompous phrases which consisted mostly of exclamations.

Most of those present in this gathering were neither "Rights" nor "Lefts" but neutrals. They were people who realized that the "Korovinites" were on the wrong track, but were afraid to speak against their own teachers, who were prominent scientists themselves. Among the neutrals were many assistant professors. Lena had understood me so well by this point in our conversation that she had only to ask, "Who is a representative of the neutrals?" and I showed her Dogadov, lean, large-nosed, and correct, who was sitting at the end of the third row and frequently glancing towards the door. "He feels that there's going to be a row and is calculating how he can slip away in good time," said Lena, summing him up unerringly.

Dogadov was Kramov's closest pupil and considered one of the leading workers in our Institute.

"And who's that?"

"Where?"

"Beside Dogadov. That one! The bald man with the flabby cheeks."

The bald man with the flabby cheeks was Kramov. For some reason he twice left the room, came back and after looking around him keenly, sat down first next to Rubakin and then next to Nikolsky.

"That's the director of our Institute, Valentin Sergeyevich Kramov."

"Well now!" said Lena with respect. "Is he a good man?"

Evasively I replied:

"He's clever."

"But as a scientist?"

"He's done a lot of good work."

People around us were shushing and I stopped talking

At last the speaker gathered up his papers, and sat down on a chair not far from the rostrum with a gloomy but fully self-satisfied air.

"Who wishes to speak?" asked the Chairman, casting his eye round the room.

Rubakin stood up.

"I wish to speak.... Comrades, a group of scientists has authorized me to read a declaration," he began, standing on tiptoe because the rostrum was too high for him. "May I?"

Zaozersky was to have read the declaration, and this would have been a shrewd blow at the "citadel of Vitalism," but he had fallen ill several days before the meeting.

"Does Rubakin work at your Institute?" asked Lena.

"Yes. Didn't you meet him in Leningrad?"

"Once or twice. Is he able?"

"Very much so. He doesn't keep a new idea to himself, either, as the others do, but walks up and down the labs asking everybody's advice about it. He gives advice, too. He's a very good man. . . ."

"'. . . It is hardly necessary to mention that in the U.S.S.R. scientific work is being carried on by representatives of all the many nationalities inhabiting the country. . . . A close interrelation of work and scientific thought, such as is possible in conditions where socialist society is being built, has raised our science to a new level, and has confronted it with majestic and unprecedented tasks. . . . Seen against this background of a developing offensive, the work of certain scientific societies, including the Society of Naturalists, founded in 1863, appears archaic. It seems obvious that this Society, especially its microbiological section, ought to serve as a special laboratory for the re-qualification and preparation of scientific cadres. It likewise seems obvious that the demands presented by the working class to Soviet medical workers should determine the nature of the section's work. Yet we have to draw attention to the fact, which is incontrovertible, that out of twenty papers read in the section during the last three years, only two had any connection with the tasks facing our country in the period of reconstruction. Suffice it to point out that any young scientist who wants to speak at a meeting of the Society has to submit to a test, after which his paper, as a rule, is returned to him for further work to be done on it.' "

It was quiet in the hall, so quiet that everyone glanced towards a door when it creaked gently. Kramov had gone out, but returned after a few moments.

"Where does he keep going to?" Lena asked in a whisper.

"I've no idea. He's telephoning somebody, I expect."

"Why?"

"Getting advice, finding something out."

"What's he finding out?"

"Oh, lots of things. For instance, whether the declaration has been agreed with higher organizations, or are the youngsters acting on their own initiative?"

"He's like that, is he?"

"He's like that."

"'... We demand that the Rules of the Society, which were adopted more than a half a century ago, be revised. We demand that the new Rules be based upon a Soviet appreciation of the tasks before the health service. We demand that the Society's work contribute directly and practically to the socialist reconstruction of our country. We demand that the gathering here present elect an initiating group which will undertake to organize a new Society of Microbiologists, Epidemiologists and Medical Officers of Health."

Pyotr Nikolayevich finished reading the declaration, picked it up, and, keeping well away from the Presidium, returned to his seat. Applause broke out—restrained below, in the hall, but very loud in the gallery.

Korovin cleared his throat.

"I must ask contributors to keep closer to the subject of the paper," he said calmly. "Who wishes to speak next?"

No one had expected that Korovin would, so to speak, "ignore" the declaration, and it was obvious that this tactic of his had made an impression. The hall became very attentive and silent. Rubakin looked round him anxiously. I hesitated for a moment, then rose and went to the rail of the gallery.

"We demand that the meeting be allowed to discuss not the paper we have heard, which is of interest only to a small number of specialists," I said, feeling that my heart was alternately dropping somewhere very low down and rising to throb in my throat, "but the declaration, which is of great public importance."

"Good for you," whispered Lena behind me.

A faint hum ran through the hall. Everybody looked up at the gallery. Screwing up one eye, Korovin tried to look at me against the light.

"May I know whom you mean by 'we'?" he asked, still keeping his temper.

"The group of scientists who have signed the declaration Comrade Rubakin has just read. Professor Zaozersky, Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences; Professors Ozerov and Khlopinin; research workers Pogrebets, Mikhailov, Rubakin...."

Terror drove the remaining names out of my head, but that didn't matter.

Korovin thought it over.

"In that case may I ask you to convey to these scientists that the declaration which they have issued does not form part of our agenda. Today we are considering the paper which has been read by Ivan Wilhelmovich Zebode. Professor Diligentov has the floor."

But it was easier to give the floor than to take it. Hardly had Professor Diligentov, noble, independent, at one time a member of the liberal professorate, begun to weave something noble, independent and grandiloquent, than a youthful voice interrupted him:

"And what is Professor Diligentov's attitude to the declaration of the group of scientists?"

Korovin rang his bell.

"Carry on, Boris Pavlovich," he said, through his teeth.

Diligentov began with the statement that all his activity even before the Revolution had been linked with progressive social thought. He had often raised his voice against the excesses of the autocratic-bureaucratic system, and for this he had suffered not a few reverses. For that reason, now, considering himself a representative of progressive science....

He spoke for at least a quarter of an hour and the minute he stopped a youthful voice, provocative and clear, asked:

"So Professor Diligentov declines to tell us what he thinks about the declaration of the group of scientists?"

"Shame!"

"We want to listen!"

"We demand that the declaration be discussed!"

"Throw the rowdies out!"

For two or three minutes Diligentov was saying something, opening and shutting his mouth, without any sound he made being heard. It reminded me of what happens at a film when the sound equipment breaks down. Then, outraged, he stopped speaking and resumed his seat. At the rostrum now appeared a thin man of uncertain age, with a hollow chest and a dark, wrinkled, gloomy face.

"Ivan Petrovich Kolomnin has the floor," said the Chairman, with emphasis and also, it seemed to me, with hope.

But his hope was not justified.

"I have not the slightest doubt that the majority of those present want to discuss the declaration and not the statistics of malaria cases between 1909 and 1917," said Kolomnin (who, I learnt, was a well-known chemist who had only recently worked at Korovin's Institute). "Moreover, this is quite natural, for it is just here, at the centre of scientific medical thought, that the root problem of the reorientation of our work must be decided. Science has ceased to be a private affair, and however much it may, in the person of our highly-respected Pavel Illarionovich (that was Korovin), pretend that it exists by itself, life will deal with such illusions ruthlessly and coldly. . . ."

He finished speaking at a quarter to ten and the devil's own row was still going on in the hall—applause, shouts, stamping (two stout men sitting in the front row were stamping their feet deafeningly)—when someone touched my shoulder. I turned round. It was Andrei.

"Five minutes past ten!"

"I'm going now."

"You must be crazy; really!"

"I assure you, he's still asleep."

Without answering he took me by the hand and pulled me after him in such a determined way that I couldn't help laughing. Lena watched us go, amazed. No doubt at that moment she resolved to remain an old maid, rather than risk being treated like this by a young husband in the second year of married life. . . .

Her lips pursed angrily, Agnia Petrovna stood before Pávlik, who was lying calmly in his little bed. He was not noticeably awaiting me with impatience, unless this feeling was expressed in the effort which he was making to thrust his pink heel into his mouth, breathing hard as he did so.

"Has he cried?"

"He has," replied Agnia Petrovna, in the voice of a judge pronouncing sentence.

I washed my hands and picked Pavlik up.

"You're cold. The child will catch a chill."

"It's all right, Agnia Petrovna. I've been running; I'm hot."

Pavlik was already stretching to reach my breast. He was like Andrei but also, in a way, like me; a business-like, concentrated expression gradually became fixed in his bright eyes as he fed....

When I returned to the lecture-hall of the Institute of Anatomy forty minutes after leaving it, having fed Pavlik, Korovin was standing behind the Presidium table, his eyes wide open and his cheeks flushed, and repeating as he raised and lowered his short, plump arm:

"The meeting is closed!"

Was it really worth while his affirming this so staunchly when three-quarters of the hall refused to agree with him? Amidst all the hurly-burly and uproar and indignant shouts one person alone remained motionless in his seat, like a symbol of the Society of Naturalists which was passing into limbo before our eyes. This was Zebode, who never heard what they thought about his statistics of malaria in 1909-1917 in the cities of Sevastopol and Odessa.

At last the noise began to subside. Rubakin appeared at the rostrum again.

"Comrades, Professor Korovin has just stated that he doesn't want to concern himself with philosophy because he doesn't see any connection between philosophy and microbiology."

I found Andrei with my eyes and nodded to him that all was as it should be. He smiled and nodded back.

Grandad, who had moved nearer to the rostrum while I was away at home, was listening attentively to Rubakin, holding his hand to his big, wrinkled ear.

"This statement of Professor Korovin's brings us back directly to the declaration which I read earlier, showing as it does the manifest ignorance of some of our prominent scientists of the older generation where philosophical matters are concerned," Rubakin went on. "That is why I propose that the very next meeting be devoted. . . ."

"I object categorically to this violation of the Rules and as a token of protest I shall leave the meeting," said Korovin in a level, hoarse voice. "And I invite all who, like myself, are disgusted by this unprecedented behaviour, to leave with me."

With trembling hands he thrust the papers lying before him into his brief-case and departed. The members of the Presidium walked out after Korovin, only Grandad remaining in his place. He crossed his legs and looked around him with a lively expression.

Somebody shouted:

"You're not only quitting this hall! You're quitting Soviet science!"

Once more a frightful din arose. The young people who had been sitting in the upper rows started noisily to go down and sit where a moment before the most honoured members of the Society of Naturalists had been sitting.

Rubakin raised his hand.

"Comrades, the meeting will carry on. I propose that we elect Academician Nikolsky as chairman."

"Vote!"

"No need!"

Grandad rose, went to the Presidium table and said, as though nothing had happened:

"I declare the inaugural meeting of the Moscow Society of Microbiologists, Epidemiologists and Medical Officers of Health open. . . ."

I waited with interest to see how this stormy meeting, about which there was much talk in scientific circles, would be reflected in the work of our Institute. A week passed, then another week. At the next Institute conference Krupensky congratulated Kramov on his election to the committee of the Moscow Society of Microbiologists, Epidemiologists and Medical Officers of Health. In reply Valentin Sergeyevich said that "everything that had happened was not only quite normal, but also was in conformity with the most profound interests of Soviet science": and the life of the Institute went on as usual.

...I found it very hard at first to go into a strange laboratory and say, "Here's something I don't understand at all." But there was no escape. I had to *learn to learn*, and not only from people who knew and understood more than I did, but also from technical workers of middle rank, who knew less than I but could do infinitely more. I learnt from everybody, and in doing this, as I wandered through strange labs, I noticed for the first time a peculiar thing which I later realized was typical of our Institute. Fundamentally the Institute depended on Kramov, who was a scientist of note, one of the creators of the so-called physico-chemical theory of immunity. In point of fact this theory had been created by the French microbiologist Bordet, but it was considered that Kramov's school had developed it in a new and original direction. Kramov explained immunity, or the non-susceptibility of an organism to infectious diseases, by laws of a physico-chemical order. These fully determine the process which takes place, which is why it can easily be reproduced outside the organism as well, in a test-tube. Thus Kramov's school reduced complex biological phenomena to physico-chemical reactions, and explained immunity without biological concepts. In the years about which I am writing, however, these views were not yet fully defined.

All the Institute's work was governed by definite direction, or at least, that was the generally accepted opinion in medical circles. Only three of the laboratories, however—Dogadov's, Krupensky's and Valentin Sergeyevich's own, the very ones at which I had been permitted to take only a hasty glance—were working on the study of new facts which confirmed the physico-chemical theory. All the remainder worked in isolation from each other, not knowing and not much caring what was happening next door. It was this disconnectedness of the work, neither the sense nor the significance of which I understood as yet, that vaguely disturbed me.

I was not then fitted, however, either by rank or by age, to form any responsible opinions about one of the best theoretical institutes of experimental medicine in the country. I had to learn. And I applied myself to learning with an ardour which I had utterly forgotten since my student days.

Everyone knows what a tremendous part is played in the work of an experimental scientist by his hands, hands which must be able to do everything, beginning with the washing of laboratory glassware and ending with the assembly of complicated equipment. Lavrov had hands like that, and they dazzled me with the precision of their work.

He was not a "flier," like Pavel Petrovich or, in his own way, Nikolai Vasilyevich, and when you listened to his coherent, logical arguments you never needed to lift your head, for his thoughts always kept to ground level. He worked slowly, cautiously, thoroughly, glancing back, looking beneath his feet, never trusting himself. But when he carried out an experiment, a kind of religious trembling of accuracy was always apparent in every movement he made. His attitude to work was one which took shape as a result of keen observation and consistency, patience and orderliness.

I thought that I could learn this in a day or two. I thought that what those supple, slim hands had accomplished was easy to do. But I set to work and within an hour, in despair at my own clumsiness and crudity, I had given it up. Just as a pianist performing a difficult passage does it so skilfully that his hearers do not notice or realize how difficult it is, so Lavrov worked, it seemed to me, almost mechanically, his hands moving as though of their own impulse.

"You must learn to make your spinal cord do this," he said one day. "The brain, Tatyana Petrovna, will come in useful for another purpose."

Of course, I soon realized that Vasily Fyodorovich was mainly a pair of hands. Not without justification had Rubakin said, in all seriousness, that Lavrov would never accomplish anything in biochemistry because every time he performed one experiment more than was necessary. For a long time yet, however, his brilliant technique was for me an unattainable model.

* * *

I had studied under Nikolai Vasilyevich when I was at the Medical Institute, and in those student years of mine his method of giving guidance to research, which consisted in leaving his pupils in complete freedom provided they showed him the results of their work, had caused me no little trouble and worry. "I like it when people find their own way out of the dark forest to the open sky without asking for help," he had said to me one day. At that time I couldn't yet appreciate one precious feature of this imaginary lack of guidance. Nikolai Vasilyevich was able to create that atmosphere which, in Pavlov's words, "is everything" in a research team. It's hard to say what it consisted of. It was an attitude to work which fundamentally determined our attitude to one another. It was the breadth of scope of the working hypotheses which he gave us. It was the seething activity which arose round him from the very moment when, going into a lab, he would throw himself into an arm-chair with the words, "This is when at last I get some rest!" It was his unquenchable thirst for the new; his "rest" invariably began with his telling his colleagues about some idea which had struck him. Finally, it was a deep and conscious adoration of the grandeur of science, an adoration which he fiercely demanded in equal measure from his pupils, doctors, and candidates of science, from laboratory attendants and from every person who casually looked into a room where test-tubes and retorts stood on the table. At the same time, it was also the two or three words of guidance which a colleague who had got into a muddle would hear at the moment of his greatest difficulties. And a thousand other insignificant trifles, too, which are as hard to pin down in words as those sometimes elusive means which a conductor employs to compel his orchestra to play the way he wants and not otherwise.

* * *

From Rubakin, meanwhile, I learnt something else. He knew how to doubt—and without that faculty it is hard to achieve success in experimental work. He had his own laboratory, but that did not in the least prevent him from looking into ours during the course of the day, and into others as well. An invaluable adviser, he was able to probe so deeply into another person's work that sometimes he stopped getting on with his own. He would enter into his neighbour's "domain" with astonishing freedom; it was more than mere entry, he used to force his way in, boldly pushing aside the neatly-arranged ideas he met there. Pink-cheeked, round-faced, his hair tousled, he would listen to you silently, turning up his clever, ironical face, and then utter ten words which obliged you to start your work all over again. He would not take anything on trust, he warned, he weighed evidence, and he poured bitter ridicule on those scientists who, for the sake of making a splash, published work before it was complete. Behind his attacks and his gibes, however, behind his mistrust in relation to details, one felt his faith and his genuine interest in the success of the team's work.

There was one other thing, too, that I wanted to learn from him: a complete lack of "pride," of that "pride" which Pavlov was later to warn young people against in his famous letter. Pyotr Nikolayevich would never persist where for the sake of the work it was necessary to retreat, but would give way. He would only flush and pout and angrily twist round his finger a long lock of hair which fell across his forehead.

"Oh hell! Why can't one ever see what other people can in one's own work!"

He had not published very much, only eight or nine papers, but for subtlety of thought and their wealth of experimental material they were startling.

I had carried out the series of experiments which Kramov had proposed to me when we had our first talk, and obtained a result which confirmed his surmise. An alkaline reaction of the nutrient medium actually was associated with this or that intensity of the luminosity of the vibrios. At the same time I repeated and extended the "transfer" of the luminosity from the cholera-like vibrios to the real cholera vibrios. Having thought of a method which even Lavrov acknowledged as "rather good," I discovered that not only mould but other micro-organisms, too, promoted luminosity. On a slope of solidifying agar I grew two parallel streaks, one of luminous bacteria and the other of ordinary micrococci. On the fifth or sixth day that side of the bacterial culture which adjoined the micrococci began to glow considerably brighter than the other.

I now had plenty of curious facts, hitherto unknown, and it was time to explain them, if only to be able to answer Rubakin's ironical question: "Well, what's your deduction?"

Deductions, however, were just what was lacking! No matter how much I meditated, or rummaged about among published work, or sought the advice of Lavrov (who, moreover, had from the start been unenthusiastic about this work), no deduction came. I could link the new facts together, though not with very much confidence. But explain them I could not, and yet to provide an explanation was precisely what my task consisted of.

I sat in the lab until late at night trying to find my way through the maze of enigmas, suggestions, and doubts. Andrei chided me for the single-mindedness, which he called "stupid," with which I refused to abandon the tangled path which was leading me nowhere. Lavrov was convinced that I ought, even if only for a time, to take up some other and less complex problem. Yet I probably would have carried on, with the courage of despair, and submerged myself in my collection of facts, if it were not for the new kinds of mould with which I began to work. Until then I had used *penicillium glaucum* only, but now I took *penicillium notatum*, and this mould quickly, and for no obvious reason, extinguished my luminous vibrios.

This was simply an absurdity, which would not yield to any bacteriological or even merely logical explanation. It had turned out that in a mixed culture some moulds act favourably on bacteria, heightening their vital activity, while others extinguish this activity, acting as enemies and antagonists.

So came the day when I gave it up, evidently just in time, as I had begun to suffer from insomnia and severe headaches, and sinister dark-red spots were appearing before my eyes as soon as I sat down at the microscope. . . .

My failure was bitter and painful. It was a paper on the luminosity of bacteria that I had read at the All-Union Conference. The work had aroused the interest of scientists of distinction, and it was galling to think that I had not justified their expectations. In the Institute this subject was always associated with me, and when I dropped it I was left in a kind of unpleasant void. Finally, the idea about mould was linked in my mind with Pavel Petrovich, and I felt myself to be guilty before him as well.

Then suddenly, amid this confusion of regrets, disappointments and doubts, I had a glimmer of success—only a very small one, to be sure, and infinitely remote from the subject which tormented me, but a genuine, practical success all the same.

A representative of the Margarine Trust came to our Institute to ask whether we could help in carrying out a certain interesting proposition.

"We make a high-quality product which has no smell, either good or bad," he said. "The customers, however, have their traditions, which we must take into account. Could you possibly do something to make our margarine indistinguishable either by colour or smell from the very best butter?"

Undoubtedly, if Kramov had not been on leave at the time, the trust representative would have received for answer a polite but caustic speech to the effect that, before one came to a scientific institution with a request of this kind, it would be as well to find out what was its province, and whether this was to any degree coincident with that of the Margarine Trust. But Kochergin, the deputy director in charge of our administrative department, a thickset little man who stuck his chest out and wore large moustaches, not only did not find anything insulting in such a request, but was apparently even flattered that such a worthy organization had appealed to our Institute. He sent for me, told me what had been asked of us, and demanded, impressively:

"Can you do it?"

I had given some study to aroma-forming microbes and when I heard this laconic question a vague idea of the ones that could be useful flashed through my mind.

"I'll have a try, but I can't guarantee complete success."

I must record that the base practicality of this task horrified even Lavrov. In answer to his objections, however, I took from my brief-case a herring, a very ordinary one, but of the highest grade, for which I had paid, I remember, 2 rubles 40 kopeks, and sang, like Lensky in the duel scene*:

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* A reference to Pushkin's *Eugene Onegin.*

"Let's begin, then!"

And so Lavrov and I (he still grumbling and crossly scratching the back of his head) applied ourselves side by side to our task.

I don't propose to recount how, to obtain aroma-forming microbes, we brought into the lab a succession of tasty things, so that Rubakin tapped his throat and said that at the mere sight of me he wanted a drink, or how from time to time worried, anxiously-whispering representatives of the Margarine Trust would appear in our Institute. I shall say only that, after some rather complicated experiments, we did succeed in solving the problem; so that whenever I see, in the street or in the train, an attractive poster on which a rosy-cheeked young woman, standing by a kitchen-range, is recommending margarine to consumers with a calm but assured smile, it always occurs to me that this assurance of hers is based to some extent upon our modest work.

The main thing, however, that came out of this affair was money: a substantial sum was paid to our Institute in fulfilment of the contract which we had made with the Margarine Trust and this to a considerable extent appeased Kramov's anger.

He appeared astonished when, in reply to his reproof (he told me bitingly that our Institute was devoted to realities and not to "substitutes"), I asked whether he would use some of the money he had received to install a new centrifuge in our lab.

That was a moment never to be repeated in my relations with Kramov. He laughed and said that he was now finally convinced that in my person the Institute had made a valuable acquisition. I didn't succeed in getting all the money out of him, but I did persuade him to add two more people to our staff.

## *Chapter III*

## UNKNOWN PATHS

### SIMPLE WORDS

In the summer of 1934 I was coming back from the Peat Institute, where I had been for over a month trying to discover a means of combating the bacteria which cause the spontaneous combustion of peat. The work had not been successful; and as I drew near to Leningrad, where I should be able to spend only one day, I was thinking how much and how long I had wanted to see again the city where I had spent my student years, yet now I was arriving there tired and depressed, and I should probably manage to see even my old Institute friends only for a moment, when they came home from work.

How could I foresee that I was to remember this single day in Leningrad for the rest of my life?

From the station I made my way first to one hotel, then to another.... All rooms were already booked, and everywhere the doormen asked:

"Are you here for the Congress?"

The day was August 9th, when the Fifteenth International Congress of Physiologists was to open in Leningrad with, so the newspapers said, scientists from thirty-seven countries attending.

I called to see my Institute friend Olya Tropinina, but her father, a forbidding man of whom when I was a student I was always a little afraid, told me that Olya was at the

Uritsky Palace and would not be back before two o'clock in the morning. Surprised, I asked what she was doing at the palace and he replied:

"Preparing for the Congress."

Leaving my trunk at the Tropinins, I went off to Lopukhinka Street, to the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine, to see Lyosha Dmitriyev, the one-time secretary of our Komsomol cell, who was now working there. When I arrived they told me that Dr. Dmitriyev had just left, and I didn't have to ask where he had gone, because the word "Congress" was resounding in all the offices and corridors of the Institute, and even in the accounts department, where I happened to find myself, a bearded man was saying indignantly that unless money were advanced he couldn't guarantee transport for the delegates.

There was only one thing to do, to go to the Congress and.... Of course, there was not the slightest hope of getting into the hall, but I might be able to exchange just a few words with old friends of Institute days whom I remembered and was fond of.

I met Dmitriyev at the Uritsky Palace. He had just come out and was getting into a car. He had filled out since I had seen him last and his shoulders were broader. I had undoubtedly changed, too, yet we recognized each other at first sight.

"You are attending the Congress?" he asked after we had greeted each other. I saw that he was in a hurry.

"No, just passing through. I'm off to Moscow today."

"But would you like to come to the Congress?"

"Wouldn't I just!"

"It's difficult, you realize; but I'll fix it.... I'll try to arrange it. You see, I'm now—don't laugh—in charge of things."

And he told me to come to the office of the Organization Bureau within an hour.

"But don't look for Tropinina, you won't find her."

"Why not?"

"Because we've sent her to meet the foreign delegates."

And off he went without explaining why they'd appointed Tropinina and nobody else for this task. Then I recalled that Olya had been famous already when she was a student for her excellent command of languages.

The most far-fetched hopes come true when one doesn't count on them too much; that's happened more than once in my life! A quarter of an hour before the Congress was due to open Dmitriyev handed me a visitor's ticket. How delighted I was! I nearly kissed my old friend. But he just said:

"Well, good-bye."

He blushed without any reason, reminding me by this of the shy and single-hearted Lyosha whom I had known.

The Congress was to be opened by Pavlov, and I awaited that moment with such excitement that I was unaware of my surroundings, except for the purple and gold walls of the big room through which I had to pass to reach the hall, flashing past me as in a dream.

From my seat in the last row of the balcony I could not very easily see the semi-circular tiers rising one above another. Physiologists, biochemists, and pharmacologists were sitting at special desks, on which lay earphones. There were Englishmen, Americans, Frenchmen, Turks; Italians and Germans wearing fascist badges; Chinese in black hats and long silk robes. I found many people I knew among our delegates. I glimpsed Kramov somewhere—glimpsed him and then forgot him.

Eleven o'clock. The members of the Presidium were taking their seats. An old, grey-headed man with a large forehead, was approaching the Congress rostrum, walking quickly, though with a limp....

* * *

Pavlov was speaking in a high, passionate voice which sounded amazingly young for his years. How striking was that distinctive way of speaking he had, rather heavily, yet freely, a way of speaking in which every word served one purpose only—to express an idea.

What did the great scientist talk about, he who had proved that mental life is a material process? About the youth of physiology. About the "highly stimulating" influence which the spectacle of "the world's scientific work personified" must have on our young scientists.

A path of scientific work stretching to infinity, full of anxieties and doubts, successes and failures, selflessness and patience, was revealed by his simple words. As though preparing to carry out an experiment he turned back his sleeve, with a light, habitual gesture. Many smiled as they noticed this workaday gesture of his. But they kept on listening....

"Nowadays our Government grants us exceptionally ample means for carrying on scientific work, and is attracting large numbers of young people into scientific research...."

He spoke in measured tones, as though holding himself back, and then suddenly brought his clenched fists down with force upon the rostrum. His passionate speech was quite different from the customary pattern of scientists' speeches at scientific congresses. War.... Speaking of the grandeur of wars of liberation, he declared at the same time that war was a bestial method of settling difficulties, a method unworthy of the human mind. And he raised before "the world's scientific work personified" the bright thought that the Congress was meeting in a country which consciously rejected war and staunchly demanded peace in the world.

"I am happy that the Government of my mighty homeland, which is fighting for peace, has proclaimed, for the first time in history, 'We do not want an inch of anybody else's land.'..."

The Congress applauded. But the delegates with fascist badges in their buttonholes removed their earphones. The deaf remained deaf....

* * *

I left the Uritsky Palace with a feeling as though something important had happened in my life, something to which I should need to return again and perhaps more than once. Olya invited me home and we had dinner together. We talked about old friends, about Lena Bystrova, and recalled our student days, and I enjoyed looking at Olya, who, just as when she was a girl, didn't like talking about herself, and had remained reserved and yet at the same time gentle and warm-hearted.

It was all as though nothing had happened. But as I saw Olya off, she was returning to the Congress, where the section meetings were beginning, I fixed my mind on the restless feeling which I had already experienced. Something had happened, something which I must think about. We said good-bye, and I walked back along Voinov Street, and then turned down along the embankment, to renew my memory of the old days and to look at the Neva.

The Neva bank! How many times I had walked along this lovely riverside! It had happened that sometimes, as I hurried somewhere, not noticing all this severe beauty which lay around me, I would suddenly be impressed by it, as though the structure of the city, majestic and proudly serene, had imposed itself upon my disordered, youthful, confused thoughts. How many evenings had we spent on those parapets; the textbooks which we ought to have been studying but could not bring ourselves to look into had remained unopened, because our talk about Mayakovsky and about love seemed so much more important. And suddenly the broad Neva would grow dark, gleaming with the colours of the night, and the spire of the Peter and Paul Fortress stood out solitary against the darkening sky. And I had to go back to the hostel in spite of everything, because there was an examination due very soon, and out of a hundred pages which I had allotted myself to read each day only ten or fifteen had been read.

And all that had happened not so long ago, only eight years before. Yet it seemed to me long, long ago, for so much had happened during those eight impetuous years, crammed full of life.

... But what had happened that day? A great scientist had spoken about how one should live and work as a scientist. He had said that there were two kinds of science, creative and destructive. That was the meaning of his words about what would happen "if war should break out—many of us would become each other's enemies, and this enmity would be carried into our scientific field itself, as has happened more than once already." And the men of destructive, not creative science, by taking off their earphones so as not to hear these words, had thereby confirmed in the presence of one and a half thousand people the truth of this incontrovertible idea.

... I beheld the whole amazing path which he had trodden when he mentioned that the generation of Russian physiologists then at work was only the second, after "Sechenov, the first of us whose lectures were not just expositions of other people's writings." Only the second generation! Yet what had been done, what had been accomplished! The world's natural science, at a standstill before the unsolved riddle of the brain, had been carried forward, sweeping away habitual ideas, establishing new concepts, confirming the materialist conception of nature. What burden had this man taken up and borne upon his shoulders without stooping? "... A burning zeal for the common task of our lives." The task of our lives! Simple words. But how distinct and vivid in the light of these words appeared one's own life as a scientist. How infinitesimally little had been done—so little, it was almost nothing. And so much needed to be done! "We are seekers after truth," he had said. Yes, some were great and some were small, but all were seekers after that truth which will prevail because the science of life will prevail, and not that of death, creative science will prevail, and not destructive science....

My little achievement with the aroma-forming microbes had flashed by and been lost to view long before; it was so little that hardly anybody in the Institute noticed it. Untouched lay the "collection of facts" which I had assembled when I was working on mould; for the time being I could do nothing with them. Now I had failed with this peat; yes, failed, and in my mind I repeated that bitter word. And nevertheless I felt a flood of new strength within me. I must work!

Andrei reproached me for hardly ever writing to him, and only now as I made him out amid the crowds meeting the train, his thickset figure in the old grey suit which he liked and which seemed about to burst on his strong shoulders, carrying the shabby brief-case which I had thrown away a thousand times, only for him, grumbling, to retrieve it, and with his firm, regular-featured, smiling face appearing beneath his grey cap, did I understand how much easier it would have been if he had been with me at the Peat Institute.

"At last!"

"How's Pavlik?"

"Wonderful! Last night he woke up and asked: 'Is Marusya to the pictures?' "

Marusya was the schoolgirl daughter of a neighbour. She loved to go to the pictures. It was from this same Marusya that Pavlik had learned to say "to" instead of "at."

"Nothing's really right when you're not there."

"Aha, so you did miss me?"

"Pavlik gets bored, just like a grown-up. He rests his chin on his fist and sits there saying nothing. Then he asks, 'And will Tanya come soon?' (Pavlik had long called me Tanya.) Blot had nobody to say hullo to in the mornings."

Blot was the kitten.

"Did you succeed with the peat?"

"I did, a little, but nothing worth mentioning."

"And why are you cheerful, then?"

"I'm not very. But do you know where I went yesterday? To the Congress."

"Really? You heard Pavlov?"

"Yes."

"Tell me about it."

"Later, when we get home. How's Mitya?"

"Same as usual."

This was a very sad "same as usual," meaning that nothing had changed in Mitya's relations with his wife, despite the fact that Andrei and I had long and frankly been urging him to break off these relations, which with every year became more and more forced, unnatural and false.

As before, Mitya was working on the virus theory of the origin of cancer—a problem which was new in the early 'thirties and seemed to the leaders of the Health Commissariat remote from clinical work, abstract and vague. As before, he spoke at all congresses and conferences, and as before, his generalizations, which, though brilliant in form, were premature and met with convincing refutations.... It was hard for him, as both his friends and his foes realized. Only the woman whom he had loved from his youth, and who was the person closest to him in the world, did not realize this; or did not want to realize it.

Andrei and I occasionally, though very rarely, called on Mitya, and for a long time after I remembered his forced cheerfulness in Glafira Sergeyevna's presence, and how he seemed to be excusing himself to us for her, when suddenly in his eyes there would flash a boundless devotion to her and a desire to conceal from us the fact that she had long been indifferent to him. We mounted a tram, squeezing ourselves on to the front platform with my luggage. An old woman carrying a bag which gave off an appetizing smell of bread pressed me against the rail, and when Andrei, standing behind me, whispered in my ear, "I missed you," I almost twisted my neck out of shape to turn round and nod to him. This was funny, but nobody on the overcrowded tram platform was bothering about us and our happy meeting and it all took place between our two selves alone.

"What's the news? Why aren't you telling me anything?

Has Rubakin called? What's been happening at the Institute?"

"How can I tell you anything when I'm being squeezed to death? You've heard about Nikolai Vasilyevich?"

"No. What?"

"He's been elected to the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences."

"Well, now! You nearly gave me heart failure. A member of the Ukrainian Academy? That's unexpected."

"Why unexpected? They've been talking about it for a long time. Oh yes, and there's something else," said Andrei, when we had descended from the tram. "Nikolsky called."

"Who?"

"Nikolai Lvovich."

"Impossible."

" 'And they told me that your wife had already returned,' " said Andrei very slowly, mimicking Grandad.

"You're pulling my leg."

" 'Her transfer of luminosity interests me. I noticed those cholera-like vibrios already back in 1893; but this transfer of luminosity from them to cholera vibrios is new to me.' "

"I'll go and see him today. I'll ring up and call on him."

We were then living on the Leningrad Highway, not far from the Byelorussian Railway Terminus, on the second, added floor of an outbuilding in the Institute yard. The entire floor was occupied by colleagues from the Institute, and we didn't mind having to put up with preparing our food in the common kitchen, and with the fact that our two rooms gave on a common corridor. The larger of our rooms was occupied by Pavlik and Agnia Petrovna, the smaller by Andrei and me.

I don't intend giving a detailed description of these rooms, in which we lived until the spring of 1941, when Andrei obtained a flat in Serebryany Lane, in a new house belonging to the "Science" housing co-operative. Indeed, I remember them not because of such facts as, for instance, that two desks, mine and Andrei's, stood in our room, but because, when we settled in, my desk at once found its place, but we trundled Andrei's desk, which was on wheels, from corner to corner half the night, arguing fiercely. Andrei claimed that it was not a question of the look of the thing but of having "a convenient place to work in." And we argued eventually to a point where I sat down on the bed and burst into tears, and then he started laughing, and afterwards for a whole month told friends about our first quarrel "on a matter of principle." And Pavlik's room I remember not because an embroidered woollen rug hung over his little bed, but because this rug was the first purchase we ever made; we deliberated gravely before buying it, and for a long time we looked on it as the most beautiful object in our house. We bought the bookcase with the green, glazed doors soon after the rug, and it's not because it was an outstanding product of the cabinet-maker's art that I remember this bookcase, but because it had a silly sort of detachable top, evidently taken from another bookcase, and we were disappointed when we found this, and tried to persuade each other that it did belong to this bookcase all the same. Everything that surrounded us at this time was associated with feelings of care for each other, tenderness, attention, and no matter where we lived later in life, those rooms in the wing of the Institute of Biochemistry always remained for me the embodiment of youthful happiness.

Living with his wife on the same corridor as ourselves was Ilya Terentich Polovinkin, that venerable attendant in pince-nez whom I had once taken for one of the heads of the Institute. They had grown-up children: a son who was an Army engineer and a daughter who was a sculptress. These were very pleasant people, and whenever they spent a rest-day with their parents they used to call on us. Eventually it got to be a habit that any of our friends or acquaintances who happened to be in the vicinity of the Byelorussian Railway Terminus invariably looked in on us.

... Looking back now on our first years of married life, I don't find in them those difficulties of getting used to each other which Lev Tolstoi writes about so subtly in *Anna Ka-*

*renina* when he describes the relations between Levin and Kitty, and which, so people often told me, were really typical of newly-married couples. Perhaps the reason for this was that Andrei and I were childhood friends, and that even in those days I had learnt instinctively to guess what were the things he would not give in to me about, whether it were a big or a small matter. It would be wrong, of course, to say that we never quarrelled at all in those years. For example, he was pleased to allow me "complete freedom," of which I had no need; this meant that he would send me by myself to the theatre or the cinema, while he sat over a game of chess with Ilya Terentich until three in the morning. I cannot say that our ideas about married life were different—not in the least! But I had not foreseen that we should quarrel, for instance, because Andrei had time to follow scientific publications but I hadn't, and though he could see perfectly well how busy I was he nevertheless used to scold me for not reading. I had to do my work, and read, and run the household, and wrestle with Agnia Petrovna, who liked to expound the principles of bringing up children to me in a didactic tone.

What a number of things I still didn't like about Andrei in those days! He used to explain to me with a sort of dreary thoroughness things which were self-evident, and I always found that exasperating. First I learnt to "ignore" this way of his, and later I even came to like it. It must be true that people love each other not only for their merits but also for their weaknesses....

Agnia Petrovna saw me through the window and sent Marusya to meet me. She rushed into the yard, crying shrilly, "Tatyana Petrovna's come back!" as though I were returning not from an official journey but from the next world. As I went along the corridor familiar smiling faces looked out from all the doors:

"Welcome home!"

"Thank you!"

"So there you are! Your family missed you terribly."

"I missed them, too."

"Welcome home!"

Agnia Petrovna gave me a dignified kiss. The rooms had been tidied up and the curtains washed and starched; the table was laid, and between the wine and the apples lay a tart—all in honour of my return.

Pavlik, in the smart jacket with a white bow which he wore only on special occasions and which he had long grown out of, sat, small and round, on the sofa, dangling his feet and looking at picture-books. I rushed over to him. He clutched me round the neck and kissed me again and again, repeating:

"It's Tanya come back! You won't go away anywhere any more, will you?"

## THE LABORATORY

Quite a long time had elapsed since the day when, as I worked on my luminous vibrios, I guessed at last that, however brightly my test-tubes might glow, science would gain nothing or virtually nothing thereby. Now, on my return from the Peat Institute, I thought once more about this work, which had cost me so much labour, care and even tears, and came to the conclusion that the problem of luminosity had distracted me from the general problem which formerly had always been at the basis of all my thinking. This general consideration, my interest in the "protective forces," had always been the more or less unconscious background against which all my experiments and observations were carried on. It was not with luminosity that I ought to be busying myself, but with the question of why the cholera-like vibrios were harmless to the human organism!

This idea was, of course, far from new. The idea of the organism being protected by benign microbes had been set forth by Mechnikov many years before scientists of the present day thought about the matter. But the idea of the benign microbes led of itself to that of controlled modification of these microbes so as to increase the degree of their benignity. That was, I think, something new.

I applied myself with ardour to finding out what work similar to mine had been done. A new section appeared in the card index which I had acquired in my student days; into this section went cards with the titles of books and articles both new and old. It was news to me, for instance, that in Russia in the years just before the world war there had been a trend in medicine the representatives of which had treated patients successfully with extracts from the organs of animals—liver, kidneys, etc. It was noteworthy that, in the opinion of some authors, these extracts acted also on infectious diseases, which coincided, by the way, with Pavel Petrovich's experiments on the effect of liver extract on the agent of anthrax. One of the older books struck me as especially interesting. This was *Organotherapy*, by Dr. Uspensky, published in St. Petersburg in 1909.

And in these old books and articles, reading which I saw clearly how creative thought, as it dashed ahead, was obliged to pass over as unexplained facts which in our day could easily be explained by any first-year medical student, I found a communication from Lashenkov, showing that the white of a hen's egg dissolves the microbes of anthrax. I repeated and verified the experiment, which showed that the hen's egg-white contains lysozyme, a substance which is excreted by animal and vegetable tissues and can dissolve microbes. This, of course, was very far from the problem of the benignant modification of microbes. Yet after making this detour, my thoughts returned to the natural protection of the organism, and found yet another clear piece of evidence of this amazing phenomenon.

We applied ourselves energetically to the study of lysozyme. We were able to show, though not so quickly as I now write about it, that lysozyme obtained from animals' hearts inhibits the growth of typhus microbes. Lavrov had the idea of using lysozyme to preserve smallpox detritus, and as on this occasion Zaozersky did not let him "perform one experiment more than necessary" he obtained interesting results.

We showed that fresh caviare contains lysozyme—a fact which could be important in industry.

Finally, and this perhaps was the most important outcome of our work on lysozyme, around us gradually assembled the people who later became the core of the workers in our laboratory. Rubakin gave us his Victor, or rather "tore him out of his bleeding heart," as he put it when he led in a slim student carrying a tightly-packed brief-case from which protruded books and test-tubes stopped with cotton-wool.

I persuaded Kramov to obtain Lena Bystrova for our lab, at first as medical demonstrator and later, if the work developed, to fill a vacant appointment as pharmacologist, something we needed desperately. Nikolai Vasilyevich helped us, sometimes spending in our laboratory nearly the whole of the time that he devoted to the Institute. We began to value these hours especially highly when Lavrov was appointed to a chair at the First Medical Institute, and for a time we were left without a leader—"free thinkers," as Rubakin said jokingly. Later, taking advantage of the fact that I had come to be regarded as temporary head of the laboratory, I invited Katya Dimant, pupil of the famous histologist Kraskov, to join us. And not only Katya, but also Kolomnin, a chemist who was as well known for his research as for his prickly temperament, thanks to which he had never worked longer than a year at any one institute. But for this fact, which was lucky for us, we should hardly have succeeded in enticing into our modest lab such a first-class scientist, none of whose work had been open to doubt, and was not up to this time. To tell the truth, we had some difficulty in training this cross, permanently sullen, fault-finding man. Still, we did it, though from time to time I had to have disagreeable show-downs with him, especially when modest and never-complaining Katya Dimant came out of the room where she worked beside Kolomnin, wiping tears from her eyes.

Altogether our lab now comprised representatives of four sciences: Lena for pharmacology, Kolomnin for chemistry, myself for microbiology, Katya Dimant for histology. Victor Merzlyakov was as yet just a very talented young man interested in general questions of biology, and every week turning up at the Institute with some new theory. Kolomnin, whom he astounded with his fantastic power of generalization, declared that Victor would become either a genius or nothing. We preferred the first alternative and precisely for this reason the future genius undertook, at my insistence, the hardest, most humdrum and monotonous work.

One way or another, this was a team which was capable of boldly setting itself the task of studying on a broad scale the medicinal substances obtained from microbes and tissues.

* * *

By the time I came back from Leningrad we already had a "past." We had been working for more than a year under the magnificent title of "Laboratory of Prophylactics Against Infection." We had got used to each other. As in every laboratory, we had our dark days and our bright days. The dark days were the ones when the work wasn't going well: animals recovered when they were supposed to be sick and died when they were supposed to live. That was when unexpectedly we discovered revolting traits in each other—not merely in modest, quiet Katya Dimant, but in any colleague who happened casually to look into our lab. That was when everybody began scolding Victor because he was always reading—in the canteen, on the stairs, in the tram; because he was always recommending books to everybody—"This may be useful to you"; because he had learnt from Rubakin to insist on a 0.1 per cent accuracy-check in experiments. And suddenly the fuses would go. And, without fail, somebody would mention the famous physicist Lebedev, who used to send a colleague home if his work wasn't progressing in the morning. And Lena brought all manner of persons into the lab who wanted to ask or even to demand advice. And Victor hid himself for several days in the library. And Kolomnin, screwing up his eyes hard, emptied a culture down the drain and began work again from the beginning.

How frequently we stumbled! How often we made our way gropingly, finding it and losing it again!

But there were bright days, too, when all went well, or if not all then at least the main and fundamental thing. And, beyond the main thing, it happened often, nearly always, we felt something else, secondary and inconspicuous, and that inconspicuous something, gradually growing, occupied an ever firmer place in our consciousness. It was as though a hand had lifted off our heavy, dreary fatigue. The animals which were supposed to live lived and those which were supposed to die duly died at the appointed time. Kolomnin would begin to puff cheerfully at his pipe and to notice, apparently, that around him people were living, working, and thinking. Katya Dimant, who always somehow knew what was going on in the adjoining labs would boast in a quiet way about our success. And nobody was angry with Victor any more for doubting things of which there could not be the slightest doubt. And people gave Nikolai Vasilyevich Zaozersky flowers, simply because he liked flowers.

To what can one compare that blissful feeling, that delight, that fever near to tears when a previously forecast result is confirmed on the laboratory bench? Telephones ringing by night: "It's worked out! We've got it!" Best and happiest of moments!

## KRAMOV. AN EVENING AT THE ZAOZERSKYS'

...When the director phoned the lab to say that he would like to see me, and if possible now, immediately, about an important matter, I realized at once that somebody had already informed him about the talk I had had with the representatives of the Fisheries Trust. I even realized that this somebody was Dogadov, who had happened accidentally to look into our lab and had caught snatches of the conversation. I wasn't at all surprised. This guardian of the scientific inviolability of our Institute had undoubtedly been horrified to learn that the matter in hand concerned soft caviare, which could be bought at any food-store.

The Fisheries Trust were worried because soft caviare deteriorated rapidly, and so, in spite of the large demand for it, could not be exported. On Kramov's insistence we had several times refused their proposal, which from our standpoint was of practical interest. But we had shown irrefutably that caviare, and not only fresh caviare but that which is sold in the shops, too, contains lysozyme. What did a few incidental experiments matter; incidental for us, but of essential importance for the Fisheries Trust? True, they had proposed that in the event of our succeeding we should pay a visit to the fisheries at Astrakhan or on the Sea of Azov, but what else would you expect the representative of an organization which was not fulfilling its export plan to think of?

Anyway, I had to go and see the director, who was obviously very angry, or else he certainly would not have spoken to me with such refined courtliness.

* * *

"Good day, Tatyana Petrovna. Please sit down."

Something had changed in him recently. Superciliousness had appeared in his face and in his pudgy cheeks which were drooping over a clean, hard collar; his lips were firmly pressed together. He was dressed not only, as always, with care, but super-smartly, and when I noticed the handkerchief in the outside pocket of his jacket, and his tie which was brighter than befitted his time of life, I suddenly remembered some nasty gossip I'd heard about his being seen very often at restaurants and theatres with Glafira Sergeyevna. I had not paid the slightest attention to this gossip, however.

"Tatyana Petrovna, I want to ask you one question," Kramov began, with his usual courtesy, in which this time something sinister was mingled. "Don't you think that colleagues who carry on negotiations of any kind behind the director's back undermine the prestige of the Institute?"

I replied that I had not carried on any such negotiations with anybody.

"In that case," said Kramov with irony, "it is quite clear that last month a phenomenon was observed which rarely occurs within the walls of scientific institutes—a mirage. A representative of the Fisheries Trust came to see you and you promised him that you would study the conservation of soft caviare; and all this was only imagined by colleagues who saw this representative with their own eyes and heard your conversation with their own ears?"

"No, it wasn't imagination, Valentin Sergeyevich. A Fisheries Trust representative did actually call on me and I did promise to look into their caviare problem. But that doesn't amount to my carrying on negotiations with him behind your back."

"Please enlighten me, then, as to what in your opinion it did amount to."

"Only this, that I intended to include caviare among the preparations on which we are testing the action of lysozyme."

Kramov raised his eyebrows in affected surprise.

"I am happy that I have succeeded, even though somewhat belatedly, in learning of your intentions, Tatyana Petrovna! But don't you consider that these intentions ought to conform to the Five-Year Plan of work of our Institute? As you know quite well, this plan is closely linked with the general tasks of our country in the reconstruction period."

Something false sounded in the very distinctness with which he uttered the words "Five-Year Plan" and "reconstruction period."

"Or do you feel that people working here, in following out their intentions, need not take the general direction of our work into account?"

"Valentin Sergeyevich, I have made no promises to the Fisheries Trust. But if you want to know my opinion, I consider that it would have been an unforgivable mistake on our part to refuse to help a State organization which is incurring heavy losses."

Kramov looked at me without speaking. Everything about this conversation was unpleasant; the weariness which he obviously did not bother to overcome on my account, and the dark irony behind which showed a profound indifference. But the way he stared at me without blinking, a fixed expression on his face, evidently turning something over in his mind, was especially unpleasant.

"All right, Tatyana Petrovna," he began again in an almost careless manner, which also offended me, "evidently you and I hold different points of view about the aims of our work. I never forget for an instant that it is the function of our Institute by its very character to head all other microbiological institutes, and to lay down a new trend in science. But you are carried away by the idea of helping various organizations of the Commissariat of the Food Industry. Don't you think that just there, in the laboratories of the Commissariat of the Food Industry, you might find better application for your talents?"

Involuntarily I put my hand to my breast. Kramov glanced at me and reached calmly for the carafe of water.

"Thank you, I don't need it.... I suppose I must understand what you have said as an invitation to resign? Since our disagreement concerns a matter of principle, however, I consider it my duty to bring it to the notice of the Party Committee. Articles are appearing in *Pravda* almost daily about the need for links between industry and science. There isn't a single scientific institution in the country which hasn't been able to achieve this linkage in some way or other.... But here? Look at the work of any of our departments from the standpoint of its practical value, and you will see...."

I waved my hand, rose, and without saying good-bye to Kramov went towards the door. He caught up with me before I reached it and made me turn back.

"You've misunderstood me, Tatyana Petrovna," he said, speaking this time without the slightest irony, quietly and firmly. "Believe me, the last thing I'm thinking of is setting limits to your scientific interests, even to the slightest extent. All I wish to do is to warn you that there is nothing easier than to agree to a narrowly practical proposition while at the same time losing sight of our fundamental aim and achieving nothing progressive in science. It seems to me that you shouldn't fritter yourself away, and that you have a tendency to do this."

Something quivered in the small, cold face which was gazing at me once more with a fixed and thoughtful expression.

"I have a suggestion to make. Let's begin our conversation again from the beginning. Now, then, tell me, without omitting anything, what you talked about with the representative of the Fisheries Trust?"

We talked for a good two hours. I told him in detail about the prospects of a new method of preserving soft caviare, and we parted on friendly terms.... So friendly, indeed, that he even reminded me that we should be meeting that evening at Zaozersky's Friday tea.

* * *

In Leningrad those teas of Nikolai Vasilyevich's had been held in the department, and served as an occasion for friendly exchange of views about what had happened during the week. Here in Moscow, however, not Nikolai Vasilyevich reigned but his wife Serafima Andreyevna, and all was quite different. Serafima Andreyevna was a handsome, grey-haired woman who was very kind, but deeply affected, alas, by one unfortunate idea: "Not to let Nikolai Vasilyevich get shut up in his scientific work."

In fulfilment of this idea she took him not only to all first nights at the theatre, which would not have been very serious, but also to tennis and hockey matches. In accordance with the same idea, she invited actors to the Friday teas—different ones each time, unfamiliar people, and this brought something awkward into these pleasant evenings.

The Zaozerskys lived in Bolshoi Afanasyevsky Lane, in a new block, and occupied a flat which was too large for an old couple. Nikolai Vasilyevich's adopted son had moved with them to Moscow, but had now settled down separately with his young wife, and was rarely to be seen at the old people's place.

This was the last "Friday" before Nikolai Vasilyevich's departure for the Ukraine. Andrei wanted to go along with me, but changed his mind when he learnt that Mitya would be there with Glafira Sergeyevna.

"I can't bear her affectations when she's at home," he said, his face darkening, "and as for when she's in company. . . . No, you go by yourself!"

I didn't insist. Once I had persuaded him to come, and I hadn't been glad of my victory. He had sat the whole evening without saying a word.

Nikolai Vasilyevich, looking cheerful and smart in a light-coloured suit, himself opened the door to me and, first glancing humorously from one side to the other, kissed me on both cheeks.

"Are you alone?"

"Nikolai Vasilyevich, Andrei asked me to convey his respects and to wish you all the best. He apologizes for not coming, but he has some urgent work to finish."

"Well, he'll only have himself to blame for letting his young wife out alone. Oh yes, he'll have only himself to blame."

And, sticking out his chest with a dashing air and shaking his head, Nikolai Vasilyevich gaily offered me his arm.

"This is Tatyana Petrovna," he said, introducing me to the guests.

There were a lot of people in the study, it was full of smoke, and everywhere there were flowers—on the window-sill, on the table, in the fire-place, as always at Nikolai Vasilyevich's. Grandad, whom I was heartily glad to see, was sitting in an arm-chair behind the desk, and, articulating each word unhurriedly, was recounting some story about a trip he had made on the completed sections of the Moscow-Volga Canal. Lavrov and a young woman whom I didn't know were interested listeners. At another table, where new medical publications always lay in complete disorder, Rubakin was in bitter argument with a middle-aged, stiff-backed Army doctor: this was Malyshev, one of the heads of the Sanitary and Epidemiological Administration of the Public Health Commissariat.

A bony man with a big jaw was smoking nonchalantly, sitting in an arm-chair with his legs stretched out in front of him. Nikolai Vasilyevich whispered to me that this was a bass from the Bolshoi Theatre.

"Grim, eh?" he asked, indicating with his eyes Serafima Andreyevna, who looked into the room from time to time and cast an appraising eye over the guests to assure herself that everything was in order. "There's a lesson for you, Tanya! Don't shut yourself up in scientific work!"

Mitya came by himself and I was sorry that Andrei had not accompanied me. We chatted a little, standing to one side, between the bookshelves, which at Nikolai Vasilyevich's stood across the room as in a library.

"How's Mother? Well?"

"Yes."

"And Pavlik?"

"He's well, too, thanks. Why do you come to see us so seldom, Mitya?"

He shrugged his shoulders in a vague way.

"I'm surprised at Andrei, too, not only at you. If I had a brother, do you think I'd only see him once a month? And if I'm not mistaken, you like each other, don't you?"

"Very much."

Mitya sighed. As I looked at him my heart ached. A contrast had always been noticeable between the set lines of the lower part of his face and his soft, absent-minded eyes. The hard, decided features had somehow faded away now, and the whole face become softer and simpler. Each gesture, each word that came from him showed him to be depressed, worried, dissatisfied with himself....

Nikolai Vasilyevich had said that he didn't want any farewell speeches, but however cross he got and however hard he plucked at his beard as he cast an imploring look around the table, he had to listen to one speech all the same.

Grandad began from far away in the past, with the story of the Odessa Bacteriological Station which Mechnikov had founded in 1886. One day a student in check trousers had appeared at this station and asked to be taken to Dr. Nikolsky.

"I asked him what he wanted, and he answered, 'Doctor, I dream of devoting all my strength to science.' I told him that he seemed to be a dandy and that didn't go with scientific work. To which he replied, 'If you mean these trousers, doctor, they are not mine, they belong to my friend Strogov. Your people wouldn't have let me in to see you if I'd been wearing my own trousers.' This young man in check trousers was Nikolai Vasilyevich Zaozersky."

Everyone laughed, but Grandad wrinkled his nose with displeasure; his speech had hardly begun.

"That was half a century ago. Much have Nikolai Vasilyevich and I seen in the fifty years that have passed since then. Plagues, escaping from their centres, have rolled across the globe. Cholera has more than once made its frightful progress from India to Petersburg. And we fought against these calamities as best we could and with what means we had, in Manchuria and in China. Mechnikov before our very eyes arrived at the theory of phagocytosis from his study of a stem of infusoria and defended it hotly. And we went along with him, fearing neither fatigue nor insult nor the bitterness of disappointment. Yes.... And now here we are, you and I, old men," said Grandad unexpectedly. "But are we, being old, to go and lie on the stove? Shall we not find our place in this extraordinary new epoch, so rich in aspirations fulfilled? We shall find it, Nikolai Vasilyevich!"

"They have found it long since," said Malyshev softly.

"And what does your move to the Ukraine signify, when already more than once I've had occasion to see you off not to the Ukraine but to China and India.... What does your move mean beyond this, that whereas previously we were separated by the distance between Solyanka Street and Bolshoi Afanasyevsky Lane, now we shall be separated by the distance between Kharkov and Moscow...."

I was sitting next to Mitya, near to the door, so as to reach the kitchen more conveniently. Serafima Andreyevna was busy keeping up the conversation, which would not have died down even without her aid, and I knew that the old domestic used to get flustered when there were a lot of visitors. I helped her as much as I could and then went back to the dining-room, where another worry awaited me. Mitya was drinking; never had I seen him drink so much. Quietly I moved the bottle away from him.

"Mitya, you shouldn't...."

Silently he placed his broad hand on mine and asked:

"Are you a friend of mine, Tanya?"

"Yes. And that's why I'm asking you not to drink."

"Right you are." He poured out another. "To friendship!"

Usually when he attended these evenings he was sincerely gay, paid comical attentions to Serafima Andreyevna and thought up and acted charades, but now he was sullen, silent and pale.

The bass from the Bolshoi was already at the piano, and had cleared his throat and tested his voice, when the bell rang and voices were heard. Some belated guests had arrived. I was busy collecting dirty plates and didn't realize immediately why silence had suddenly fallen upon the table. Nikolai Vasilyevich hastily rose and went out and we could hear him saying in an insincere voice to somebody in the hall:

"Delighted, delighted. This is splendid."

Glafira Sergeyevna and Kramov were the newly-arrived guests.

"I'm crawling along quietly as befits an old man," Kramov was saying in a loud, laughing voice, "and behind me I hear the lightest of footfalls. An attractive lady is overtaking me! I've just assumed a dignified air, adjusted my tie and put my hat straight—I look round, and it's Glafira Sergeyevna!"

He repeated this when he came into the room and then told it again to Rubakin and Malyshev, who listened to him with forced smiles. He was embarrassed; though he bore himself in a self-confident, jaunty way, asked Serafima Andreyevna something and introduced himself to the singer at the piano, it was none the less evident that he was very embarrassed. Glafira Sergeyevna was still in the hall, powdering her face and putting on lipstick. Nobody looked in Mitya's direction.

I carried the crockery out and tried to stay as long as possible in the kitchen, all the more because the old woman was in despair over having lost the sauce-boat. The sauce-boat was found later, but a new worry then appeared; some feathers which Serafima Andreyevna had ordered to be arranged decoratively were lying in the partridge dish. I arranged the feathers and went back to the dining-room. There all was as though nothing had happened. Glafira Sergeyevna was sitting beside Mitya. The awkward moment had passed.

She never said much. Gazing straight into the face of the person who was talking to her with her large, still eyes, she would remain silent; at one time this had misled even

Rubakin, with his irony and subtle wit. But this evening! This evening she behaved as though her mere appearance on the scene ought to oblige everyone to abandon their trivial conversations and pay attention only to her, busy themselves only with her.

She boldly carried on a bantering conversation with Kramov while Mitya looked askance at them, raising his eyebrows, and drank and drank until even the polite, reserved Malyshev eyed him with concern. She proposed toasts and, to my amazement, talked easily and unforcedly.

There had always been something rather heavy in her beauty: slow movements, a low brow, eyes that darkened when she smiled. But this evening she carried herself confidently and freely. Her soft face was flushed, her teeth gleamed. It was as though something lifted her up and bore her wherever her eyes looked.... I had seen Glafira Sergeyevna like this before.

She conversed wittily, or at least cleverly. Only with Rubakin did she make an awkward joke, mentioning Lena Bystrova as though by chance. Pyotr Nikolayevich was fond of Lena. Many suspected this and a few knew it to be so; but they knew, too, that he could not bear even the faintest allusion to be made to his relations with Lena, which were hardly defined and which he carefully protected from the view of outsiders. Pyotr Nikolayevich blushed and pretended not to have heard.

Mitya said he had to make a telephone call and left the room. The singer began to sing and as I listened or rather didn't listen to him I thought about Mitya. But then the song was over and Mitya still hadn't returned. Quietly I went out into the hall—all the rooms in the Zaozersky's flat opened into the hall—and looked into the study.

He was sitting in an arm-chair, bowed, covering his face with his hands.

"Stop this, Mitya; everything will come out all right."

He lifted his head.

"What shall I do? Tanya, what shall I do?"

"It's quite clear to me what you ought to do. Shall I tell you?"

He didn't answer.

The telephone rang. I lifted the receiver.

"Is that the Zaozerskys' flat? Excuse me, please, could you possibly ask Dmitri Dmitriyevich Lvov to come to the telephone?"

"Certainly."

I handed over the receiver.

"Yes, what is it?"

The singer was singing Mephistopheles' aria, and Mitya with a gesture asked me to close the door.

"Yes, yes." He quickly questioned the person at the other end. "Who, did you say?"

His face was pale and exhausted, his eyebrows raised high with displeasure.

"Well, so much the better; we'll wait." And after saying good-bye, he replaced the receiver with a gesture of annoyance.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing special. The director of the Institute has appointed a commission to examine the work done by my lab." Mitya was in charge of a laboratory at the Gabrichevsky Institute.

"Listen: I'll leave without saying good-bye. You tell them that I've got a headache."

"All right."

"My head really does ache, by the way. Is Andrei at home? I'll telephone him."

I pressed his hand firmly, closed the outside door noiselessly behind him, and returned to the dining-room.

## NIGHT

Andrei was sleeping so soundly that he didn't wake up even when I put the light on to comb my hair before going to bed. Then he muttered something without opening his eyes and I said, "Sleep, sleep." This was hypocrisy on my part, of course, for in fact, I very much wanted to tell him at once about what had happened that evening at the Zaozerskys'.

I didn't wake him, he awoke by himself, and not because I dropped my comb more than once on the floor, either. He blinked, drew a deep breath, and suddenly opened his eyes; probably he thought that morning had come. I laughed.

"It's Tanya, isn't it—have you come back?" he said, in a sleepy, good-natured voice. "But I looked and wondered if I was dreaming."

"Of course it's a dream. And now you're dreaming that I've taken my shoes off and sat down beside you," I said, doing so.

"And then?"

"And then I kissed you and wished you good night. But wait; don't go to sleep. I must tell you something. Something's gone wrong with Mitya in his work, apparently. Didn't he phone you?"

"No."

"You phone him, then."

Andrei frowned.

"I'm afraid it's late now."

"No, it isn't. I'll phone him."

Nevertheless he did telephone Mitya himself, even though Glafira Sergeyevna might have answered.

"Please keep ringing."

"No answer?"

"No."

He hung up the receiver.

"What did Mitya tell you?"

"I didn't get a chance to ask him properly. He went away at once."

The window was open and when Andrei put the light out we somehow felt still more the freshness of the autumn night.

"He was worried, you say?"

"Yes, very much so. I feel so sorry for him."

"I feel sorry for him, too."

A heavy vehicle drove with a clanging sound along the Leningrad Highway.

"You've no idea how she behaved this evening at the Zaozerskys'," I said, feeling as I spoke that my passionate desire to tell Andrei at once about Glafira Sergeyevna's conduct had passed off, and that I wanted to sleep very much more than to talk about something which, in essentials, we had known about long since. "She came with Kramov and ordered people about the whole evening. And, do you know what? She's grown cleverer."

Andrei laughed.

"What's the matter with you, Tatyana?" he said. "You woke me up and now you're asleep already yourself. Oh no, let's talk."

Somebody was walking by under our window, but my eyes were shut, and I knew this not by the footsteps but the shadow which glided obliquely across the ceiling and the walls of our room, a shadow which glided not in the waking world but in a dream.

"Oh, I'm sorry, I quite forgot," said Andrei when I was already dozing off. "Klimashin phoned you, from the Fisheries Trust."

Klimashin was the deputy director of the Fisheries Trust.

"He asked me to tell you that he's made arrangements with the People's Commissar for your trip."

"What's that?" I opened my eyes. "For what trip?"

"To Baku or Astrakhan. He said that you could take your choice."

"Is the man crazy?"

I leapt out of bed and put the light on.

"What's the matter with you?"

"He promised me that he would do nothing over Kramov's head," I said with despair. "We agreed on that! And now Kramov will think again that I've been trying to arrange my affairs behind his back."

"But when I spoke with Klimashin I gathered that you yourself had suggested taking a trip?"

"I didn't suggest it, I merely said that the thing had worked out all right in the lab and now a large-scale test must be organized. I merely said that much, and now, if you please, they've phoned the People's Commissar. Then he'll phone Kramov, and once more Kramov will think that I'm keeping something from him."

"But you'll be able to see Kramov in the morning and explain to him what it's all about."

"Thank you very much. Do you think that will be pleasant?"

Andrei thought it over.

"Whether it's pleasant or not, you'll have to call on him; and all the more because the People's Commissar may phone him not tomorrow morning but tonight."

"May the devil carry off that Klimashin. I can't understand why he's in such a hurry. His precious Fisheries Trust isn't burning down."

"It probably is. Do you want to go to the fisheries?"

"Of course I do."

"Well, go, then." He looked me affectionately in the face. "Don't get cross. It'll be all right."

There was no hope of going off to sleep again, especially as Andrei suddenly said that he was terribly hungry, and, as I watched him eating with such gusto the cold meat which had been left over from dinner, I recalled that, distracted by all my troubles and worries, I hadn't eaten any supper at the Zaozerskys'. We sat down to the table and ate every scrap of the meat, with a good appetite.

There was some wine left from our last rest-day, when we had had visitors. Carefully, so as not to waken Agnia Petrovna, we fetched the bottle from the little cupboard which hung near the head of her bed and drank from it. To move the wine-glasses, which stood in this cupboard also, was risky and not worth attempting.

Then Andrei remembered that we hadn't been to look at

Pavlik that day. It was our custom every evening, before we went to bed, to stand over his cot and discuss him. Now, indeed, it was not evening any longer but morning: through the windows the shuffling of a broom could be heard, and the blinds glowed with the light of the early dawn rising somewhere far from Moscow. But we went to him, all the same. He was asleep, curled up cosily, his little fist resting on his nose. It was stuffy in the room, as Agnia Petrovna, in spite of my insistence, used to close the hinged window-pane during the night. I opened it noiselessly. Pavlik sighed. It was very hard to restrain myself from kissing him, but I did, and only stroked his hand gently.

"You'll wake him," whispered Andrei.

Early the previous morning Pavlik had told me about the friends whom he'd met in the garden, "Misha with his Grandad, and Misha Big-Face, and Gulya 'Bakh-bilibakh.' " The last-mentioned friend had evidently not long learnt to walk, for Pavlik spoke of him as a senior would speak of a junior, with a good-natured, protective expression. I told Andrei about this in a whisper; he burst out laughing, and woke up Agnia Petrovna, and we were driven out in disgrace.

* * *

Next day I went to the Gabrichevsky Institute. Mitya was busy showing some microbiologists from Leningrad round his lab, and we exchanged only a few words.

"Oh, somebody's impatient to swallow me up," he said irritably when I asked him about the commission. "All right. When I get the chance I'll tell the People's Commissar that I'm very glad an opportunity has at last occurred to acquaint him with my work."

"You should have a rest, Mitya."

"Why do you say that?"

"Your face looks tired."

"That's because I didn't sleep last night. It's nothing, Tanyechka," he said smiling. "Don't worry about me. Everything will be all right."

I didn't want to leave and for a few minutes we stood silent in the corridor.

"We often talk about you, Mitya."

"That's good of you."

"Look us up."

"Without fail."

## ON THE VOLGA

The People's Commissar had phoned Kramov. That I realized as soon as I entered his study. All the time while I was trying, not very coherently, to tell him that I knew nothing about Klimashin's talk with the People's Commissar and, furthermore, had agreed with the Fisheries Trust people that they should not undertake anything without the knowledge of the director of my Institute, he walked up and down the room, his pince-nez gleaming, freshly-shaven, a tie-pin in his tie, pale, looking younger and terrifying. I couldn't tell what was in his mind as he stopped from time to time to fix his cold gaze upon me; probably he was deciding what to do with me—whether to kill me at once or else, relenting, to sentence me to a severe penance.

"That's enough of justifying yourself, Tatyana Petrovna, nothing out of the ordinary has happened," he said, in a level, courteous voice, even more level and more courteous than usual. "Since you've undertaken to do this work you must go through with it to the end. So.... And what's this I've heard; you've been buying the caviare with your own money?" he interrupted himself with a laugh. "That was a quite pointless sacrifice. I don't think the budget of our Institute would have suffered shipwreck from the purchase of a certain quantity of soft caviare."

"That's of no importance, Valentin Sergeyevich."

Lena Bystrova and I had actually bought the caviare with our own money, Lena cursing each time because it was so expensive. But one couldn't really telephone the Fisheries Trust and ask for 200 grammes of caviare in the name of our highly-respected Institute All the director had to do was to say a few words to his deputy to relieve us of this "pointless sacrifice."

"When do you intend to set out?"

"Any time you consider it necessary."

"Oh, I'm not fussy," Kramov replied with a faint smile. "Why talk about it—go off tomorrow if you want. I've already ordered a travel warrant to be made out for you. And here, Tatyana Petrovna, is my advice about your route. Go by train to Saratov, and then from Saratov to Astrakhan by steamboat. Have you been on the Volga before?"

"No."

"Then that's the very route you must take; you won't lose much time and you'll have an incomparably pleasanter trip. And so," he extended his hand to me with a sweeping movement, "as the sailors say: a good voyage and a happy landing!"

* * *

The first mate came to our cabin to inquire whether we were comfortable and Lena (I'd managed on the eve of my departure to persuade Kramov to send Lena Bystrova with me) thanked him so warmly that he was quite embarrassed. In a few moments we learnt that he visited each of the cabins in turn, but that did not make it any less pleasant, and for a while we discussed what an attractive man he was: sunburned, in a dazzling white jacket and with a short, grizzled beard.

The beautiful banks of the Volga were behind us, above Saratov, and whatever we were talking about on deck people hastened to tell us first of all that "the loveliest bit" had passed by yesterday, and from now up to Astrakhan itself there would be just steppe and nothing else. But the steppe landscapes were so beautiful that we never tired of looking at them.

Those were days which I have remembered for the unexpected acquaintances we made, for the variety of fruits piled up on the wharves and in the bazaars, the novelty of the life of the great river, on which we passed innumerable caravans of grain travelling in the opposite direction. Little steamboats, puffing vigorously, drew it behind them in flat-bottomed barges; large boats were loaded with it up to their very gunwales.

Oil-carrying barges passed us unhurriedly; cargoes were transferred from steamboats to trains, "from water to wheels," where the railway tracks ran down to the wharves.

This was the Volga, in whose upper reaches a dam was being erected, excavators were digging up the earth, dozens of villages had already been transferred to new locations and others were being prepared for unheard-of migrations. The Moscow-Volga canal was being built, and the echoes of this mighty work were heard everywhere—on the wharves, where cargoes were taken up and sent off for the canal, and in the conversations of the Volga people who were travelling with us and who proudly named these cargoes in thousands of tons. In everything we felt an over-all sensation of growing intensity of work, and along with it of organization, confidence, and well-being. All was as unlike as could be to what we knew of the old Volga depicted by Repin and Gorky!

Still, we caught a glimpse of that on the second day of our journey, when an old blind man with a psaltery, looking as though he had stepped out of a picture by Vasnetsov, came on to the lower deck. Sunburned, thin, he sang in a feeble but pleasant voice about how

*The lads, the lads, leapt up in haste,*
*Swiftly their sail unfolding, they*
*Raised up a sapling for a mast*
*And ran for thirteen hours that day—*
*Not thirteen hours, but fourteen, along the Volga River;*
*Not thirteen hours, but fourteen, along our Mother Volga.*

The steamboat stopped at big towns only and there not for long, but we managed to rush out on to the quay or into the main street, returning out of breath and full of impressions, which, though sometimes we could express them in two words—I've realized that only now—we would remember all our lives.

We gazed at the banks, which were monotonous but pleasant with their delicate colouring; we stood in the bow, where the wind blew merrily, bursting all at once into our lungs, so that it seemed that in a moment we should be blown away like a ball; we sat in the stern, where the atmosphere, warmed by the sun and by the hot breath of the engine, made one sleepy; we bought some water-melons at the next wharf, and went back to our cabin.

In Moscow Lena and I saw each other every day and were hardly ever separated, but it was only rarely that we had the chance to speak about any but Institute affairs. Yet there was one matter, quite unconnected with Institute affairs, about which I knew Lena wanted to talk to me. True, this matter had long since been "settled and signed" by the gossip-lovers whom we had in our Institute. But it turned out that it was still far from being settled, and was the object of serious and even agonizing cogitations. It was not without reason that Rubakin lost his temper at a mere mention of it, while Lena became unusually quiet and even lost her ready wit, which was quite unlike her.

"You say that Andrei was in love with you when you were still a couple of school children. Does that mean that he was in love with you all that time, all those years when you didn't write to each other and knew nothing of what was happening to each other?"

"I don't know. Perhaps he would have forgotten me if we hadn't met in Anzersk Settlement. In those days back in Lopakhin it was just the young love that passes along with one's youth. But then we met as quite different people, and what we felt for each other was different, too."

Lena pondered.

"No," she said, "no; something had remained in his heart, otherwise he wouldn't have fallen in love so quickly."

We were silent.

"I remember reading somewhere, I've forgotten where, that if you can't say for certain that you're in love, that means you aren't in love. It's not true. Take yourself. Didn't it take you some time to realize you were in love?"

"Yes. Several years."

"And then it turned out that you were in love?"

"It didn't 'turn out.' I thought about him all that time, and it gradually sank right into me. I don't know how to explain it to you.... Without those thoughts of him there would have been an emptiness in my heart. You know what I mean?"

"Yes, of course. But now, doesn't it seem strange to you that you were in doubt so long?"

"No.... Sometimes even now I feel that I'm still doubting."

In our cabin the bunks were placed one above the other. I lay on the upper one and Lena did not know that I was looking at her face, at her wide-set, troubled eyes. She had been combing her hair back smoothly of late, and I liked it because in this way she revealed her large, clear brow and the strip free from sunburn beneath her hair.

She threw the end of her cigarette out of the porthole and took another. "Even now...." It seemed that she wanted to ask me what I had meant, but changed her mind. Perhaps she thought I wouldn't answer; and she wasn't wrong.

"And do you know, the most difficult part of it is," she said pensively, "that somehow I've stopped recognizing my own self. I've always been decisive about things, but now I keep catching myself thinking. And the trouble is I can't make up my mind and only worry him and myself."

"And it's a good thing that you are worrying him."

I raised myself on my elbow so that Lena would understand that I was looking at her.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it means you want to tell him the truth. Yes, that's right, the truth and only the truth, however hard it may be. If you're not sure, if you hesitate, you mustn't be afraid to tell him of your doubts. You shouldn't spare him," I said, getting worked up, "because an untruth, even though a very small one, can poison your best years for both of you. Or rather, for you, Lena."

We were silent.

"I've no doubt that Pyotr Nikolayevich loves you. He's a reserved man. To know him deeply you would have to know him for years, I think. I didn't suspect that he was reserved when I first knew him. When I realized it, however, I understood a great deal at once—including his way of making a joke of everything, but really being very shy."

"Yes, I know."

"Also that his loneliness is a burden to him, and the only reason he hasn't married until now is that he thinks marriage a very serious business."

"Do you think so?"

"I'm sure of it. I even learnt, too, that he likes music, and plays the piano not at all badly."

"Really?"

"There, you see, even you didn't know that!"

"But altogether I don't know much about Pyotr Nikolayevich," said Lena, thoughtfully. "Tell me more about him."

"What else shall I tell you? He's a scientist, and science is for him so much more than just a personal matter that he spends as much time in other people's labs as he does in his own. He's an invaluable adviser, he gives his ideas without stint, he's amazingly generous. But, you know that as well as I do. In short, he's good all through. And all will be well, given one condition—that you really love him."

Lena got out of bed and kissed me.

"You know what the trouble is," she said, uncertainly. "Before, I just used to fall in love, so that then everything was quite different. But now. . . . I don't know how it's come about, but all the time I can't wait and I feel that it's because I'm hurrying to see him faster and faster. Was it like that with Andrei when you still didn't know whether or not you loved him?"

* * *

Large, black, sharp-prowed boats, on which water-melons and musk-melons were piled flush with the sides, rocked upon the dappled water. The vessels were lying in two rows, so that to reach the wharf one had to cross another steamboat; a noisy, motley crowd was in motion everywhere, on the waterside, on the road leading to the town.... And everything—the people, the boats, the road, the bridge over some tributary stream on whose bank large black pigs were quietly lying—everything was baked by the sun and smelt of fish, petroleum, and tar. This was Astrakhan, the great kingdom of fish!

As we were going to the hotel where a room had been reserved for us we took a look at the fish market. Huge, dark-grey monsters, with sharp backs and sharp noses like lances, hung head-down from the ceilings—these were sturgeon. Others, also of terrifying appearance, lay on the counters, their stupid snouts agape—these were sheat-fish. Long white plaits of sturgeon's backbone dangled at the doors. Great glass barrel-jars were filled with caviare, both pressed caviare at which we looked with disdain and soft, which seemed only waiting for us to set to work upon it.

"How much is the soft caviare?" I asked.

The shop assistant told me the same price as in Moscow.

"Why is it so dear?"

"It's the best quality. It stays at this price for two days and then the price comes down."

"Does it deteriorate quickly?"

"It becomes another quality," the shop assistant replied diplomatically.

"And is it true that a kilo of soft caviare gets 25 grammes of salt?"

He smiled.

"They say that that actually was the proportion in former times. But in those days soft caviare was not as a rule prepared in warm weather. If you put 25 grammes into a kilo at this time of year, you won't succeed in getting it from the fishery to the shop; it will become another quality in that time. As a matter of fact, it's a secret, how they prepare it. The expert brines it here, in a special room to which strangers are not admitted."

"Really!"

"Yes, that's the way it is."

"What kind of expert is this who is the only one able to brine caviare?"

"There's not just one. But there aren't many of them. Do you think preparing caviare is easy? It's a very subtle skill, handed down from generation to generation. Oh yes, the caviare expert is the most important man in the fisheries."

Lena and I glanced at each other.

"That's interesting. . . ."

I think the shop assistant was disappointed when, after this purposeful conversation I asked him to weigh out half a kilo of Caspian roach, to which we had become very partial in the last few days.

We claimed our room at the hotel and went back to collect our things; it was already dark and we didn't recognize our ship. She lay by the main wharf with all her lights ablaze, a band on the upper deck was playing a waltz, and gaily-dressed young people were strolling in pairs around the lower deck. This was "the ball," our cabin steward explained to us, an Astrakhan tradition which we liked so much that we, too, sauntered for a while among the young people before saying good-bye to the ship on which we had spent such pleasant days.

## SOFT CAVIARE

To tell the truth, we had not paid much attention to what the shop assistant in the fish market had told us, and it was indeed hard to believe that such a strange attitude to the secret of preparing caviare could be maintained in our time. But it turned out that the situation was just as he had described it.

We went to the caviare factory in a cutter, which travelled for a long distance among the "hard places," as they called here the impassable overgrowths of reeds. At the wharf we were met by the director. Some workmen carefully transferred our bags to the shore, and we made our way to the office, to talk about the tasks which we had been sent to carry out and make the acquaintance of the chief expert of the factory, Timofei Petrovich Zimin.

He was a little old man, thickset, bearded, with a clever face, wearing iron spectacles ("he's an Old-Believer," the director whispered to me); in former times he had been one of the owners of the "factory." We had reached the office and were now stepping up into the porch, so that it was inconvenient to ask questions.

"Please introduce yourselves," said the director.

We gave our names.

"Ah yes, I'd heard! They wrote from the trust. Science!" said Zimin, smiling.

He met us with an air as though all this had happened before and was being repeated without any notable change; as though two young women had already before come from Moscow, about whom he had been warned by someone, "They're Communists, so be on your guard," and as though they, too, had asked him at what season the sturgeon came from the Caspian into the Volga to spawn, whether there was any connection between the colour of caviare and it's tastiness, and so forth. And as though he had answered them exactly as he answered us—verbosely but indefinitely, politely, with a nuance of boredom.

"Of course! These are things one must understand," he said, when I explained to him why we had come to Astrakhan. "It's no trifle, but an important matter. Certainly!"

With the assurance of an old man who does not expect to come across anything new in life, even if he wished to, Zimin led us to a raft. And by the very calm of the gestures with which he showed us his department it was not hard to guess that he considered himself the principal person in this caviare factory.

A multitude of boats of various sizes and types—large, crescent-shaped ones with high prows and sterns, and smaller ones with partitions between which a living, glittering mass of fish seethed in water, and very small ones without decks and with slanting sails—came up one after another to the raft. Small huts made of planks stood upon it, and into the open doorways of these huts the workers hurled the fish by hand direct from the boats—they were small fish, caught with a fine-meshed net, as Zimin explained to us: carp, zander, pike. Choice fish—sturgeon and *sevruga*—were taken in elsewhere.

When I was getting ready for the journey I had read something about the preparation of caviare, and saw nothing different from what I'd read: the worker stunned the fish with a strong blow on the head and then, cutting it along the belly, took out the roe. Another workman squeezed the roe through the "sieve," as they called a network of hempen threads stretched tightly over a frame. This caused the separate roe-corns to fall through into a tub placed under the sieve, while the membrane remained on the sieve. The caviare was then washed and conveyed to the factory for the conservation process. After that nobody called it "roe" any more, but "product." A log-house stood on a flat, sandy shore about five hundred yards from the base-raft. This was the factory, which, though small, was at that time one of the best in the Astrakhan fishery.

Lena and I decided, judging by our first impressions, to devote four days to learning how caviare was prepared, but we spent a good week travelling from factory to raft and back again, gradually getting baked by the hot Astrakhan sun. We smelt of fish from head to foot, sampled the "product" until we couldn't face it any more—but we had to! We learnt from Zimin to talk his caviare jargon—"*yastyk, tuzluk, tarama, galagan*"—and gave some lectures to the workmen and office employees, first on general health-education subjects, and then on matters connected with the results of our tour; but I'll speak of that later....

I asked the director on our very first day there to allocate us two rooms, one to live in and the other to use as a laboratory. We had brought several boxes of laboratory equipment from Moscow. The director gave us one good room, at the factory, but the other one was bad; it was in a wooden barrack building, and was very stuffy, with a low ceiling, so that Lena, who couldn't stand heat well, was unable to sleep and prevented me from sleeping. But one day after visiting the laboratory which we had set up in the factory, and seeing our microscope, centrifuge, incubator and other quite ordinary pieces of apparatus, the director pondered and transferred us from the barracks to the home of a fisherwoman, Praskovya Ivanovna Burmina. She was a short, strongly-built woman with black eyes and high cheek-bones, who spoke such beautiful Russian that we couldn't help listening whenever she started on one of her stories which glided calmly along. I remember one of them, about the spring run of the *beshenka*, when this fish goes up the Volga in shoals, making deafening splashes, leaping at the trees which lean on the water, getting stuck in the bushes and running aground on the shore, where dogs and cats impatiently await it. Flocks of cormorants drive it towards the shallows and swallow fish after fish. Vessels swing to the side of the river to make way for it, because no other work can be done when the *beshenka's* run is on.

Lena asked Praskovya Ivanovna why the fish was called *beshenka*.

"It's mad, that's why it's called *beshenka*,"* she replied placidly. "You call it herring. My grandmother used to say that you can go mad from eating it. That's superstition, of course. And I'll say this: when you consider how foolish these fish are, why, sometimes you want to spit with vexation!"

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* From the Russian word *Beshenny* which means mad.—*Ed.*

We returned from our laboratory at about midnight, and Lena, who said that one ought always to relax before going to sleep, every night found one and the same distraction—she would sit in the porch and gaze up at the sky. The sky really was worth looking at: impenetrably black, with delicate stars scattered over it and shining brightly under the vault which hung down on all sides over the hushed earth.

Those were the few moments when we thought about other things besides where and in what form microbes got into caviare, and at what stage of its processing our lysozyme could work upon it with the greatest effect.

* * *

Our job was to answer four questions, which coincided successively with the stages in the preparation of caviare. First, was it sterile in its natural state, that is up to the moment when the fish was placed on the cutting-table and the workman ripped open its belly?

Secondly, given that between this operation and the sieving sufficient time elapsed for the roe to become contaminated with microbes from the air, in what quantity did these microbes enter it, and of what sort were they?

Thirdly, when forcing the roe through the sieve, the workman pressed it by hand—what did this process amount to, from the microbiological standpoint? At the same time the caviare was washed, and the water for the washing was taken by the workmen from barrels which stood on the raft and were not changed very often.

The fourth question—for the sake of which we had come here and laboured diligently from morn till night, acquired an aversion to the "product," studied the "brining process" and became permeated through and through with the smell of fish—was this: would our lysozyme stop the growth of the microbes? Or, putting it another way: could it not be used for the preservation of caviare? Or, in still another way: could it successfully replace other, tested preservatives?

I did not express myself quite accurately when I stated that we studied the "brining process." The method used by Zimin, who could prepare the very best quality caviare, "extra-fine," remained outside our ken, for when we tried to question the chief expert about his method he answered us vaguely, stroking his beard, his little grey eyes glittering with cunning behind his iron spectacles.

Still, we were not very much concerned with his secret. Even while we were in Moscow, working with lysozyme on caviare which we had bought in the shops, we had got encouraging results; so it was hardly likely that here in the factory, where, as we had proved, we could obtain lysozyme in any quantity from fresh caviare, we should not succeed in demonstrating the superiority of our method over the ancestral secret, whatever it might be, which this crafty capitalist specialist was keeping to himself. And we set to work with ardour, encouraging each other.

I don't want to give the reader the impression that the conservation of caviare was one of the fundamental tasks of my life, so I'm not going to describe this work in detail. Here, in a few words, however, are the results we obtained. The roe was sterile in the fish. In each gramme of roe which the workman carried to the sieve we found 15,000 microbes. After the passing through the sieve, this figure rose to 72,000. I washed the caviare with lysozyme and within a couple of minutes the microbes practically disappeared; not 72,000 but from 0 to 7 microbes were to be found in each gramme of caviare.

* * *

A certain amount of courage was needed to propose the contest to Zimin, especially as the weather had become very hot—up to 104 degrees—and as yet nobody in the world knew how caviare washed with lysozyme would react to such temperatures. Nevertheless we did propose it.

Lena was sure that Zimin would refuse, and really, judging by his cautiously ironical attitude to what we were doing, it was natural to expect that he would decline to measure his method against "science." But he did agree, and it was obvious that he was stung to the quick!

When Lena went to talk to the director he thought for a long time in silence, puffing at his pipe. . . . Then he took a sheet of paper and drew up the conditions for the competition in a series of points. The very best kind of sturgeon's soft caviare was to be made available to the contestants in unlimited quantity. Each of them must prepare up to ten "rolled" containers. (There was a workshop in the factory where containers were "rolled," that is, hermetically sealed.) The jars were to be opened five days later, and thereafter. The best taster in the factory would decide which caviare, ours or Zimin's, deteriorated first.

What he did with his "product" this time I don't know; it must have been something special, or he wouldn't have stroked his beard with such a meek air. Coming into our laboratory he modestly placed some jars of caviare on the table and said in a kindly way:

"Well, young ladies, how goes it?"

We replied that things were all right with us, and beside his jars we placed our own. He looked at them and smiled.

"Well now, how many days do you think will pass before your caviare deteriorates?" he asked.

I replied bravely, "That remains to be seen. And what about yours?"

"Mine?" He narrowed his eyes. "In heat like this? Five or six days, not more."

We couldn't guess why he was lying, but we decided at once that his caviare would last not five or six days but a great deal longer.

I didn't grasp at first what our contest really meant, and why such a stir developed around it in the settlement. Timofei Petrovich Zimin was a man of the old Volga of the merchants, the Volga of the forced labour of stevedores, of poverty and doss-houses and of the celebrated Processions of the Cross.

In Zimin's secret were reflected the traditions of this Volga, now extinguished for ever. And we young women who had come from Moscow, claiming that caviare itself contained a substance which could preserve it from infection, were representatives of modern thought, of the new, Soviet culture.

That was why the workers at the caviare factory made such a stir about our contest. That was why Praskovya Ivanovna said to us, "The people's eyes are on this contest." That was why the next issue of the wall newspaper appeared under the headline: "Who will beat whom?" That was why, after a talk I gave in which I ruthlessly criticized the entire process of preparing caviare, beginning from the moment when the fish is taken from the water, the workers who rose to speak in the discussion talked of how life in the caviare factory had remained frozen, as it were, while life was developing rapidly in every factory and collective farm. That was why we were right to submit our little discovery to the risk to which any new thing is liable.

After five days had elapsed the taster, a stern little old man with a brown wrinkled face, opened the first jars, in the presence of the director and of both the contestants. Frankly, I was terrified when the taster, after finding that Zimin's "product" retained all its first-class properties of taste, took a spoonful of caviare from our jar, sniffed it and then, screwing up his eyes significantly, put it in his mouth. What precisely he did with it inside his mouth, why, having smacked his lips, he moved them about, is outside my ken, but at all events it was clear from his concentrated expression that some very serious and very responsible work was going on. At last he swallowed the caviare and then, after a pause, observed that "no difference was apparent between the two samples."

Exactly the same scene was repeated two days later; the only difference was that Lena and I had hardly been able to sleep at all the previous night. This time the taster began with our jar, and I noticed that a shadow of sincere astonishment passed across Zimin's face when the taster, after performing all his magical movements, declared that, as before, our caviare conformed to all the requirements laid down under all-Union standards for the "extra-fine" quality. Using the same official phrases he also rendered Zimin his due.

"Well, young ladies, it seems you've done well," said Zimin, looking at our caviare through a magnifying glass which he took from his pocket. "You'll lose, though."

"We'll see," I replied.

"You'll lose," the old man repeated firmly. "Your caviare's weakening. Another day and it'll be gone."

Undoubtedly Lena and I had been losing weight all through that month, from the heat, the worry, and the intense work. But I think that the moment when we really began to waste away was when this capitalist-specialist declared that our caviare "was weakening." As soon as the door closed behind him Lena and I began to test the durability of individual roe-corns, first with our fingers and then with our tongues. We didn't find that they had become any less durable than before. But perhaps the experienced specialist had seen something which we, with our "illiteracy in matters of caviare," had overlooked?

At last the decisive day came. The moment I entered the laboratory I hastened to the cupboard to see if any "swelling" was visible. (That was what they called the distending of the containers which occurred when deteriorated caviare began to ferment.) No! But Zimin's jars too looked just as before.

Two research workers from the Fisheries Institute had arrived the day before, together with a correspondent of the regional newspaper. The Astrakhan State Game Preserve also sent a representative, a very clever girl who almost persuaded Lena and me to pay a visit to the Game Preserve in a cutter after the test was over. The Komsomols mounted a picket at the laboratory door, as those who wanted to see with their own eyes "who would beat whom" were too many. A press photographer who turned up at the last minute showed me a picture which had been taken, I don't know by whom or when, but in which one could discern a glass cupboard containing two rows of containers, neither of which was in any way distinguishable from the other.

In the presence of all these worthy people, of whom I haven't mentioned half, the taster opened a container of Zimin's caviare. From the look he gave Zimin already as he was tasting the caviare, I realized that the latter had failed; his "extra-fine" had not stood the test.

"It's gone."

Everybody looked at Zimin. He smiled a crooked smile.

"It's the ninth day," he said, spreading his hands. "For such a temperature, this, ladies and gentlemen, is a record without precedent!"

He'd clearly lost his head, otherwise he wouldn't have addressed us, in the 18th year of the Great October Revolution, as "ladies and gentlemen." But he was quite right: until then the maximum period of preservation was considered to be eight days, and that not at a temperature of 104 degrees but at ordinary room temperature.

Everybody began talking at once when the taster had pronounced his verdict. He waited for a minute or two, then opened one of our containers. Everybody fell silent.

He must have felt excited himself, since, before taking a sample from our container, he almost thrust his long, wrinkled nose into it. Then he put a spoonful of caviare into his mouth and stood stock-still, rolling up his eyes under his brows and putting his whole heart into his work. Everybody stood motionless: the director, who was leaning heavily with both hands upon the table; the girl from the Astrakhan reservation, who was looking at the taster as though he were a magician, with a happy, childlike expression on her face; Praskovya Ivanovna, who was present at the sampling in her capacity as representative of the Trade-Union committee; the research workers from the Fisheries

Institute; and even the press photographer, who until that moment had been circling round the room pointing his camera at everybody.

"The 'extra-fine' quality has been fully retained," said the taster weightily.

The quality had been retained; and it was still retained on the tenth, the eleventh and on the twelfth day. When we got back to Moscow, a special commission from the Export Trade Department, consisting of the best caviare experts, came to our laboratory, and their chief taster, who was not a wrinkled grey-beard but a well-dressed, athletically-built, handsome man, sampled our caviare on the twentieth day and found that "the quality had been retained." Only on the thirty-third day did lysozyme-washed caviare begin to deteriorate in room temperature, while on ice it kept for one and a half years.

Of course, this was still far from being the end of the job. For our method to be used widely it was necessary first and foremost to make it cheaper, as lysozyme was more expensive than other preservatives. But that was up to the Fisheries Trust's own laboratory.

## RETURN

When Rubakin met us on the platform he said that Andrei had arranged to come with him but had been called away on urgent business. He had asked me not to worry if he should return home late.

"But where is he? What's happened?"

"Nothing's happened, I assure you," Rubakin replied, hurriedly, and, it seemed to me, with embarrassment. "Well, how did your trip go? How thin you've got. You're just bags of bones!"

"Pyotr Nikolayevich, what has happened?"

"Nothing at all, I tell you. Everything's all right at home: I called there yesterday. Pavlik's well, he can read the letter A, and he's saying that Mummy-Tanya has never been away so long."

"Where's Andrei been called away to?"

"What a worry-guts you are!" said Rubakin, spreading his hands. "Apparently there's been an accident on the Metro construction site," he whispered, taking me by the arm and walking beside me through the noisy crowd moving towards the station hall. "He was called in yesterday. He didn't sleep at home."

"There! You ought to have said so at once."

Besides the laboratory equipment we had brought with us three-quarters of a hundredweight of caviare—some of our own, some of Zimin's, and some neutral. Rubakin and the Institute driver took charge of our luggage. Lena ran after them for some reason, and came back a few minutes later in an agitated state, as I could see by a mere glance at her.

"Do you know what he's told me? They're transferring our lab to the Fisheries Trust."

"What?"

"They're giving up the ground floor of the Institute building to the City Public Health Department, and Kramov is applying for our lab to be transferred to the Fisheries Trust."

"He's gone mad."

"Apparently the People's Commissar's order is being drawn up now."

"Oh, no, this shan't happen."

Lena waved a hand irritably.

"Who won't allow it; you?"

"No, not me."

"Who, then?"

"We."

"Explain to me, Pyotr Nikolayevich, what does this mean?" I asked, after our luggage had been carefully loaded into the Institute truck and we, free from our burdens, were making our way towards a tram. "Is it really true that our lab. . . ."

"Ah, Elena's told you already. Yes, it's true all right."

"And you take it so lightly?"

Rubakin knit his brows.

"Lightly?" he muttered. "Last week I sent Lastochkin a letter giving at least a dozen and a half reasons against the decision."

Lastochkin was in charge of the bacteriological institutes department of the Public Health Commissariat.

"And what came of it?"

"He rejected them."

"Why?"

Rubakin shrugged his shoulders silently.

"But why transfer us to the Fisheries Trust? We worked on problems of the spontaneous combustion of peat; if that work had succeeded, would the lab have been transferred to the Peat Organization? We extracted lysozyme from horse-radish; does that mean we ought to belong to the Office for Marketing Fruit and Vegetables, or to somebody else? What nonsense it all is! Did you explain to Lastochkin that the caviare job was just something done in passing? Oh, hell, I shudder every time I look at caviare now."

"Now, don't get excited, doctor. Only pancakes are cooked quickly. This, my dear, is a much more complicated affair than you think. They are not transferring you to the Fisheries Trust, they are transferring you to industry. Understand?"

"No."

"At the last meeting of the Academic Council Kramov made a long speech about the tasks of our Institute. He declared that he has been accused of limiting himself to theory, of separating theory from practice, of repeating the elements of French and German science. These accusations, he said, came in the main from people working in the Institute itself. Accordingly so as to show that all this is slander, wrongful accusation, and downright lies, he will hand over to the fishing industry one of the best laboratories in his Institute. He is grieved, of course. He does this reluctantly, overcoming tormenting doubts and hesitations. But at a time when *Pravda* is declaring in every leading article that science must help industry in every possible way, when every institute from the largest to the smallest is striving to render such help, he, Professor Kramov, does not consider himself justified in remaining on the sidelines, and so forth. What's the matter, Tatyana?"

"Nothing in particular."

"You've gone pale."

"I slept badly. . . . And here's our tram."

* * *

Already before the train had reached Moscow we had run into a belt of rain so fierce that the carriage grew dark and the windows were covered with incessantly pouring streams of water. Then the rain had passed off, as though on purpose to allow us to wait in comfort for our tram, and now it began again with fresh violence. The streets were empty, cars went along the roadway as though along a river, splashing and leaving a long, radiating wake behind them. The tram was overcrowded, and I found myself separated from Rubakin and Lena.

"Kramov wanted to take advantage of this order about the transfer of the ground floor to the City Public Health Department so as to shut down our lab," I said to myself. "That's his game. What he wants is to shut it down, because he knows quite well, of course, that there's nothing for us to do at the Fisheries Trust."

An elderly woman pushed her wet umbrella into my face, apologized, and didn't understand me when I replied, "Not at all, it's very pleasant." Pyotr Nikolayevich had said just now that I was pale, but now I was feverish with excitement.

"Word for word he repeated at the Academic Council what I said to him. He gave the impression that he was only thinking of the link between science and industry, while, sheltering behind phrases, he is getting rid of a lab which really is trying to effect this linkage! What cynicism!"

"And so it pours and pours," they were saying around me. "It went on like that all night."

"I've lived forty years in Moscow and never seen such rain."

"They say that one of the Metro trenches is flooded."

"I can't say much for this weather. It's a real deluge."

". . . No, I must do something," I was thinking, "and at once, without losing a single moment."

* * *

From time to time I ran home, where Pavlik, who waited patiently for me, at last thought up a game in which Mummy-Tanya came in and went out again at once. In this game the Institute figured as a mysterious and extremely disagreeable place. "You wait, they'll take you away to the Institute!" he would threaten his teddy-bear.

I spent half an hour with Pavlik; kept phoning the medical-sanitary administration of the Metro-Building Organization, who always politely returned the same reply—that Andrei Dmitrich had gone out to "the objective"; and returned to the laboratory.

On the whole the situation turned out to be better than I had expected. Everybody I spoke to, from the demonstrator to the head of the department, was convinced that we could not give up without a struggle an entire floor of our Institute building, especially as it contained our most complicated apparatus, including equipment for refining phage.

Rubakin and I went to see Kramov at the end of the day, and he said that he was sorry to be saying good-bye to a lab on the organization of which so much work had been spent. "But if we take a wider view of this question. . . . You see, there is another side to the matter. . . ."

We left having achieved nothing.

I still needed to consult Lavrov, but he had gone on leave the day before our return. With Grandad, however, I had an important telephone conversation.

He said that while the City Public Health Department was a most worthy institution, one shouldn't surrender floor space to it, especially because Lenin himself had ordered that our Institute be housed in this building.

"It was Vakhrameyev's residence," he explained, making a long pause after each word. "After the Revolution they were going to hand it over to the 'Blue Blouse' theatre. And they did hand it over, and some lathes were brought into the yard. But then the late Tarasevich went and saw Lenin, and put it to him that this was a wrong decision, because the 'Blue Blouse' theatre ought, according to its own principles, to perform only in the open air. Maybe it wasn't the 'Blue Blouse' but some other theatre," added Grandad thoughtfully. "But anyway, Vladimir Ilyich agreed, and then Tarasevich quickly installed your Institute in Vakhrameyev's house."

I listened to him with bated breath.

"Nikolai Lvovich, do you know if this allocation was made by word of mouth only, or has any document been preserved?"

"What do you mean, document? I suppose they telephoned and the things were taken away."

"What were taken away?"

"The lathes. They were performing there amongst some lathes."

"Nikolai Lvovich, you're a dear, and thank you. What you've told me is very important. May I call on you and consult you about this affair?"

"Certainly. And don't let the City Public Health Department get away with it. They can manage without disturbing you."

* * *

Andrei did not telephone either at seven or at eight, and at last I could bear it no longer and went to where he was working, in the hope that even if I didn't succeed in seeing him I'd at least bring him some sandwiches; I didn't doubt that he'd eaten nothing since the previous day. . . .

Dr. Belyanin, Andrei's superior, a stout, elderly man with a deafening voice and a red, beefy face, stopped me as I was rushing at top speed through the entrance of the office building.

"Hullo, Tatyana Petrovna," he shouted, so loudly that I started involuntarily. "Did I frighten you?"

"Hullo, Ilya Ilyich."

"You're looking for your husband, I suppose. He's on the site."

"I know he's on the site. Shall you see him?"

"I'm going to him now."

"Oh, are you? Then take me with you."

"I can't, Tatyana Petrovna."

"Please, I beg you."

"I can't, believe me, I can't. They wouldn't let you through."

"Even if I were with you? I only want to take him some sandwiches and say a couple of words to him. You see, I've just come back from a mission today. We haven't seen each other for six weeks."

"Can't be done."

We walked out into the street together. Belyanin settled heavily into his car. Then, nearly falling out into the roadway, he opened the door and said:

"I'll take him the sandwiches."

"But please, *I* want to go. I have all my papers on me and you can say I'm from the City Public Health Department."

Despite his appearance, Belyanin was a kindly and considerate man. He thought, made an angry grimace, then shouted: "Get in!"

* * *

I didn't at once understand what had happened in the section to which Andrei had been sent and which three ambulances approached, one after another, at the same time as we did. Workmen, soaked from head to foot, were hurling bags of earth or sand from lorries straight into water beneath which could be seen neither roadway nor pavement. Water was rushing headlong down a steep street towards a brightly-lit wooden bridge which was thrown over another, broad street. There was nobody on this bridge, only the water which ran down, gleaming dully, overflowing the planking; the disaster which obliged the soaked workmen to hurl their sandbags into the roadway had happened not on the surface, but deep beneath it, in a trench dug under this bridge. What it was, and what the Metro builders were doing amid this chaos of collapsed overhead covers, twisted shields, and ragged wires, beneath streams of mud which were pouring into the trench along with the water, I didn't know. Later Andrei explained to me that the rain had washed away the edge of the trench, and a five-storey brick building standing near it was left overhanging a thirty-three-foot drop at the bottom of which men were working.

He was walking somewhere, as wet as the rest, with his jacket stuck to his body and up to his knees in water. A nurse with a red cross on the arm of her raincoat was running after him, asking anxiously about something or other, and glancing towards a place where stretcher-bearers were raising from the ground a man whose legs dangled helplessly.

"Andrei!"

The place where the accident had happened was brightly lit. He was in a lighted stretch and I in a dark one, and when I called to him he stopped and stared without recognizing me.

"It's me!"

He rushed toward me and all but fell, slipping on a wet log.

"You here? How did you get here? I couldn't come to meet you. Was Rubakin at the station?"

"Yes, yes. Everything's all right. Are you coming home soon?"

There was a big blotch of mud on his cheek and I began to rub it off with my handkerchief, but he prevented me, kissing my hand.

"I'll be home in a couple of hours. They've already got on top of it; they're beginning to put earth along the bridge now. Have you phoned Mitya?"

"No."

"Well, give him a ring; or, better still, go and see him. All right?"

"Has anything happened to him?"

"No, but go and see him."

There were people standing around us but regardless of them Andrei said in a quick whisper:

"Oh, how marvellous that you've come back at last!"

Belyanin smoked; he asked for a cigarette, but before taking it he began looking for something to wipe his wet hands on. I didn't want to go away, but Andrei talked with an air of impatience, as he always did when at work, so, thrusting the sandwiches into his hands, I said that I'd call on Mitya, and left.

* * *

Mitya lived not far from Crimea Square, in a little wooden house on the site of which now stands the huge building of one of Moscow's higher educational establishments. One entered from a yard, through a neglected garden where wet pillow-cases and sheets were always hanging on the bushes. An elder-tree grew by the verandah; in the summer it was attractive, but now it looked black and bare and gave the house itself a mournful, deserted air. It was dark in Mitya's room, but in the hall a lamp was burning: a thin strip of light could just be made out under the door which gave on to the verandah. I knocked. A woman, an old pensioner, who lived in the same flat as the Lvovs, opened the door and said that Dmitri Dmitrich was apparently asleep.

"And what about Glafira Sergeyevna?"

There didn't seem to me to be anything out of the ordinary in this question, but the old woman opened her mouth, was going to say something, and then didn't say it....

"You knock, perhaps he isn't asleep."

Some children's institution had formerly been housed in this big room with the windows looking out on the garden, and as a memento of the previous tenants there were two wash-bowls with taps and cut-off pipes hanging from the ceiling in one corner. Mitya had managed to fix things somehow so that these ugly pipes were almost invisible. Now, however, the moment I entered the half-dark room, for some reason I noticed them immediately.

Through the open ventilator I could indistinctly see the branches of a tree, on which some wrinkled autumn leaves were still trembling. There was something unlived-in, I felt, about this room, smelling of tobacco smoke, with its wide, white, bare window-frames.

"What's the matter, Mitya? Are you ill?"

"No, I'm all right."

A piece of dark-coloured cloth had been draped over the shade of the table-lamp. I began to look for the switch, but Mitya said:

"There's no need to put the light on, it's quite light enough."

He lay on the divan, his face buried in a pillow.

"How was your trip?"

"Quite successful. May I sit next to you?"

"Yes, of course. Excuse my not getting up. I've had a tiring day."

I placed a chair beside the divan.

"Mitya, has anything happened?"

"Nothing at all."

He lit a cigarette, breathed deeply and sat up, his head hanging down and his long legs wide apart.

"Things are in a bad way with me, Tatyana," he said so sadly and simply that I at once believed that his affairs really were in a bad way. "Andrei was telling me about the quicksands. Apparently there's a rotten patch somewhere under Moscow where the builders of the Metro can't do anything. It's fine, wet sand, almost dust, with an admixture of clay. They can only get through it with compressed air; it percolates through chinks and creeps under your feet. I've fallen into a quicksand like that, my dear. How it happened I don't know; but wherever I put my foot it sinks in."

"I don't understand what you're talking about, Mitya."

He was silent.

"I know it's funny to look for a logical mistake in what has been happening to me for years. It wasn't today that I realized that I'm never able to carry through to the end the work that I've begun. I've realized before that this is what I've got to overcome if I'm to have any hope of achieving anything in science. All my life I've only made beginnings, and now I'm surrounded by dozens of jobs which I've started and given up, with nothing that I can lean on, because I didn't manage to carry any one of them through to the end. You see, Tanya, I had new ideas! The virus theory of cancer alone could have filled my whole life, if I'd had the persistence to put an experimental basis under it. And now, when everything's collapsed, and I've understood that my very best and most precious energies have been thrown away in vain, I look around me and see nowhere to tread, it's quicksand all around me."

He stood up and, his shoulders hunched, walked across to the bookcase where, as I knew, he had a section reserved for drinks. There was a tinkling of glass. He poured out a tumbler, drank it quickly, standing with his back to me, and then began pacing the room. His big frame clad in crumpled pyjamas, he glanced this way and that, a gloomy look on his face.

"What are you drinking?"

"Cognac. Would you like some?"

"Yes."

"I haven't any liqueur glasses. May I pour you some in a measuring glass?"

"I'll do it myself, may I?" And, wishing Mitya happiness, I drank a quarter of a measuring glass; then, quickly, before he could collect himself, I flung the bottle out of the ventilator. It happened as I wished; we heard the bottle crash on a stone surface and break.

"What have you done?"

"What needed to be done. Now calm down and don't look at me like a madman. I'm very fond of you, Mitya, and I can't allow you to carry on like a miserable whipped cur."

He sighed and rubbed his face fiercely. Then he put the light on, and I realized what it was that had changed in this room, which previously had been furnished cosily and comfortably. It was almost empty, although the familiar furniture—the divan, the two arm-chairs, the tables, the bed—were still in their old places. Everything had been stripped from these tables and arm-chairs, and they stood as naked as though they were in a shop or a storeroom. The deep alcove where Mitya washed and dressed used to be partitioned off with a piece of tapestry, but now this was gone, and in the alcove, the furnishing of which had been Mitya's pride, some winter clothes were scattered over the floor itself. Nor was the carpet there any more which used to lie in front of the divan. Instead of the chandelier, a solitary bulb hung from the ceiling by a dirty piece of flex. Only the books stood, as before, on their shelves, but they, too, looked lonely and bare.

"So that's it. You...." I was going to say, "have broken up," but something stopped me and I said instead, "you and Glafira Sergeyevna are going to live apart now?"

He smiled ironically.

"That's it, exactly. She's left me."

"What did you say?" I began, joyfully, then stopped. Mitya's lips were quivering as he turned away without looking at me. We were silent. "Well, Mitya," I said at last, "there's nothing I can do to console you in this sorrow, which I know is a very great one for you. But, you see, it was bound to happen, sooner or later. So it's better this way...."

"Yes, perhaps so.... But I'm—in despair, Tanya," he said suddenly but softly, with his face twisted with grief. "I know you hate her and Andrei does, too, and all my friends thought she was ruining me. But you don't know her, and you never will, because there's hardly a more reserved person to be found. She's better than you think, Tanya. She's kind."

"Kind?"

"Yes, very kind. For years she's been sending money to some distant relation of hers who can't make ends meet. She's tender and affectionate, and that abruptness and the undue familiarity with which she treats people, all the things about her that irritate Andrei and you, I assure you they come from shyness, from knowing that people don't esteem her, don't like her. Oh, what's the use of talking? You're thinking now that she wouldn't have left me if I hadn't had to leave the Institute. But let me assure you, if I hadn't left but...."

"What's this about leaving the Institute? I don't know anything about that."

"Didn't you know that a commission was appointed to look into my laboratory?"

"Yes, but...."

"The commission found the work unsatisfactory. Incoherence, divorce from practice, and a couple of dozen other charges which I didn't even try to answer. You're going to ask me why not? Very simply because I don't know myself whether they're true or not. I put in an application to leave. You saw Andrei, and you mean to tell me that he said nothing about it?"

"He's been at the Metro site since yesterday evening. There's been an accident there. He only told me that I must go and see you at once."

"Yes? That means, then, that he didn't manage to tell you that everything that's happened is my own fault. He thinks that I. . . . Oh, what's the use," said Mitya bitterly, waving his hand.

I said nothing. The doorbell rang. Mitya asked, "Andrei?" and went to open the door.

Andrei came in, very tired and exhausted-looking, sat down, rubbed his eyes, and talked. It was as though a lantern had been brought into the room; and its light made clear where the door was and where the window and why there was no need to take the one for the other. . . .

I didn't want to be present during this "masculine" conversation, so I found a pretext to go into the part of the flat where the old pensioner lived. From time to time I came back to the room. The conversation was long and unhurried.

"It's not true that you've achieved nothing in science. But look here, tell me this, honestly now: didn't Glafira lead you away from all that was and is going on around you? Why were you so solitary in your work, why didn't you have any desire to notice and understand people who were walking alongside you? Now she's thrown you over, you moan, 'I want to immerse myself in science!' You don't even ask yourself whether you have the right to! Frankly, Mitya, it comes hard to me to see you sitting here with your hands folded, in this stripped room, when today ought to be marked in the calendar as a red letter day! Yes, you love her. . . ."

Mitya had opened his mouth to speak, but Andrei angrily moved nearer to him, and he again set himself patiently to listen to his brother.

"So what are you going to do, lay down your life for the sake of this love which has been ruining you, which has actually led you to disaster—if not physical then spiritual? By your energy, your uprightness, your respect for the great things which are being done in our country, you're a man of the new world. You can look ahead, you have bold ideas.

People still haven't ceased to have hopes for you, and they're right. Take yourself in hand, man! You've had to leave the Institute; well, look at it from the standpoint of a scientist to whom personal success means nothing compared with the public good. You know what you should do. Go away somewhere—not for long, just a year or two. In Central Asia they haven't been able to cope with cutaneous leishmaniasis. Go there! I'm sure that if you seriously take up the fight against this disease, you'll succeed beyond anything you could hope for...."

Mitya offered no objection, on the contrary he agreed with Andrei; but in his agreement was evident the weariness of a broken man.

## MANY WORRIES

Determined to do everything that could be done, I set out the next day to the defence of our laboratory—I don't know what else to call those patient negotiations with the heads of various departments, big and small, those memoranda proving that twice two is four, those journeys to the Public Health Commissariat and to the City Public Health Department.

The major difficulty, as I realized on the first day of my labours, consisted in the formula: "The Institute is handing the laboratory over to industry"—a formula which at once disarmed all who didn't want to think seriously about what it meant. We painstakingly exposed this formula before the Public Health Commissariat officials. We demonstrated that from the standpoint of the State's interests it was inapplicable in the given case, since to disrupt something which was necessary, which had not long been in existence and which was developing successfully could not bring any benefit either to industry or to science. We showed that the study of lysozyme and other anti-microbial media could not be carried on in a laboratory attached to a trust, which had to confine itself to narrowly practical and restricted aims. We offered to include in our laboratory's programme questions of interest to the fishing industry, in particular a new brining process about which I thought I could do something. We promised to render all the help we could not only to the fishing industry but also, for instance, to the flax industry; our laboratory had done successful work on speeding up the process of flax-retting which was of real importance to industry. . . .

And when the evenings came round, Rubakin would scold us because at the City Public Health Department we hadn't said this and at the Public Health Commissariat we hadn't mentioned that. He scolded us and encouraged us and talked on the phone with Litvinenko, the Secretary of the District Party Committee, and advised us where to go the next day.

Kramov's influence in scientific circles was very great, as soon became evident; it blocked us at every step. Wherever we went the first question we were asked was always:

"And what does Valentin Sergeyevich think about this?"

We replied that he thought the same as we did.

"Then why hasn't he phoned me?"

A curious impression of exaggerated caution in the approach to the matter by many of those whom I met accompanied our busy activity from first to last.

Kramov must have been well informed, otherwise he would probably not have hastened as he did to acclaim our achievements with caviare. Everything was brilliantly prepared for the examination by the commission of experts from the Fisheries Trust which I mentioned, and the director of the Institute in person—gay, amiable, courteous—received the honoured guests. The director himself invited the Deputy People's Commissar to attend the examination, and warmly recommended Dr. Vlasenkova to him as a scientist who possessed to a high degree the ability to apply practically the results obtained in laboratory research.

"We look upon Tatyana Petrovna as a future leading light of industrial bacteriology," he said meaningly.

It was the director himself who was the first to congratulate us when the chief taster of the Fisheries Trust attested the exceptional quality of the caviare preserved for three weeks with lysozyme. After the expert commission had done its work breakfast was served in the director's study, and the speech which Valentin Sergeyevich delivered on this occasion was devoted, naturally, to the idea of the real, practical aid which scientists must render to industry if they genuinely wanted to facilitate the socialist transformation of our country.

... I could give a detailed account of our "defence," for I remember each interview, each meeting with startling distinctness. But of course there's no need to do this. I'll say only that there came a moment one day after which we—Rubakin, Lena, and I—began to do everything that we were doing for the defence of our laboratory twice or three times as fast as before. This moment occurred in the office of a member of the collegium of the Public Health Commissariat, a very polite man, who listened to me with such attentiveness that my hopes were roused but then said that he could not interfere in what was already a lost cause.

"But why do you think that we've lost?" I asked.

"Because the Commissar signed the order yesterday."

Nikolai Vasilyevich Zaozersky flew to Moscow that day for a few hours on some important business. Late at night I managed to catch him at the Kiev Railway Terminus: he was returning by train. Very briefly I told him about our troubles. He meditated, stroked his beard, and there and then, in his carriage, wrote a letter to the Commissar, sticking up for our laboratory and declaring that our work, particularly that on lysozyme, had incontestable clinical importance.

The following day Rubakin took this letter personally to the Commissar. He came back furious, pale, his hair ruffled; the Commissar had said that he saw no reason to re-consider his decision.

From the standpoint of abstract logic it was possible to imagine what would happen if we were to lay down our arms. But whenever I imagined the senseless destruction of this thing which had been created by work, energy, and passion I began to feel so angry—I myself didn't know against whom—that I felt quite dizzy.

It must have been at one of those times that I lifted the receiver and phoned the President of the Academy of Sciences (or rather, not him in person but his secretary) with a request to see me on important and urgent business.

An hour before I took this decisive step a lorry had come rattling into the Institute yard, and from it a number of barrels had been rolled down a plank directly under our windows. Clearly, some muddle-headed administrator had decided after mature reflection that it would be hard to find more suitable packing material for the equipment of a biochemical laboratory. This was the packing material provided; it smelt strongly of fish and it drove me out of patience.

Hurriedly and incoherently—it was the first time that I had been incoherent in these difficult days—I set about expounding our case.

"I fully appreciate that all this has nothing to do with you directly. But if you think about it, the President of the Academy of Sciences can't be unconcerned with anything which is of vital importance for scientific work," I said, as tensely as though it were the President's secretary himself who was guilty of the handing-over of our laboratory to the Fisheries Trust. "Vladimir Ilyich Lenin assigned this building for use by the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes. And now they tell us that what matters is not the building but what goes on under its roof. Well, if that's the way they feel, let them look and see what goes on under that roof."

We were cut off and I threw down the receiver in despair. But not more than a minute later the telephone rang again.

"They cut us off, Comrade Vlasenkova. Please explain your business from the beginning, a little slower, if possible, so that I can take it down.... Very well," said the secretary, when I had set forth my request. "I'll inform the President. Please phone me in an hour's time."

An hour later he said that the President would receive me on the following day, at half past one.

* * *

I don't remember who it was (Lena, perhaps) who had the brilliant idea that I should go to the Academy of Sciences not alone, but with Nikolsky.

"We have got so used to Grandad," she said, "that sometimes we forget that he's a famous scientist; but that's just what he is. Besides, you may lose your head, or even get something wrong. No, you take Grandad with you."

... I didn't phone Nikolsky, as I was afraid that he would postpone going with me; and I was sorry, because Grandad was busy. Hunched up, his fleshy nose angrily wrinkled, his legs crossed, he was sitting on a wooden dais which had been set up in his study while two sculptors, a man and a woman, modelled him in green clay. It was very easy to perceive, by the angry snorting with which Grandad was jerking one of his long legs as it rested over the other, that he intensely disliked sitting idly on that dais while sculptors clad in dirty overalls kept staring searchingly at him every minute, as though they wished to make sure that they were modelling precisely him and not anybody else. He cheered up as, after knocking, I entered the room. But when he recognized me, and realized that I was not the person who could help him to escape from his disagreeable situation, he began to shake his leg still more angrily than before.

"What's the use!" he said, waving his hand in a hopeless way, when I passed a remark about the bust, which I liked, that the sculptress was finishing. "They've played a trick on me! Thanks very much!"

The sculptors laughed cautiously.

"I agreed to two sittings—and now, if you please, today's the seventh. Here am I sitting here like a rooster on a perch. Everything's at a standstill."

"Nikolai Lvovich, if you remember, I phoned you a day or two ago. . . ."

"Yes, yes. Have you beaten them off?"

"That's just it, I haven't. The Commissar has signed the order and already they've sent the packing materials, Nikolai Lvovich. Things are in a bad way altogether."

"What's this about packing materials? What's all this tomfoolery about? Did you explain to them that you don't intend to study caviare any more?"

"We've explained everything, Nikolai Lvovich, and more than once. Now our only hope is with the Academy of Sciences, and, if that doesn't work, then a direct appeal to Kalinin. . . . The President of the Academy of Sciences is seeing me at half past one tomorrow. Nikolai Lvovich, help us—come with me! It won't take much of your time. What you say carries weight, unlike what I say. Please don't refuse, dear Nikolai Lvovich. It's very important for you to come. You and nobody else. Very important."

Without paying the slightest attention to the sculptors, who were in despair when the "model," stamping his feet violently, got down from the dais, Grandad paced the room agitatedly and asked:

"Why tomorrow? Let's go at once."

"We can't go now. They've given me an appointment for tomorrow."

"All right, tomorrow then. To the President? Very good. Splendid. We'll give them packing materials!"

* * *

Until then I had only seen portraits of the President of the Academy of Sciences, and the first impression I had when, accompanied by Grandad, I entered his spacious, modestly-furnished study, was that he was exactly like his portraits; a thin, pale face with a pointed beard, and a glance livelier than one expected to see at his age from under his typical old man's jutting eyebrows.

I had been worried as I mounted the stairs, and even felt that I was trembling a little and my heart sinking, but I calmed down at once when I saw how simply the President, leaving his chair, came to meet us, asked us to sit down and behaved cordially to Grandad. Later, during our interview, I kept trying to get a better view of him, and every time I met in reply an attentive gaze in which was evident a sincere interest in what we were telling him.

"Well, now let's call on this young representative of science to speak," said Nikolsky, looking at me with a severe but at the same time encouraging expression. "Though I intend to give full support to Tatyana Petrovna's request, I think it would be best for her to explain it to you herself. Besides, I speak slowly and you're a busy man."

This time I had no need to explain why the formula "science must help industry" ought not to be applied in mechanical fashion to the handing-over of our laboratory to the Fisheries Trust. The President agreed with this at once. But it did not seem clear to him how the link with industry would be achieved if the laboratory were to remain part of the Institute.

"Here, it seems to me, the point is not that you promptly fulfil requests submitted by industrial organizations," he said. "Apparently, something only has to go wrong somewhere in the Fisheries Trust or the Flax Trust and they at once run to you and your laboratory rescues them. In my view this is also a somewhat mechanical conception of the link with industry, which can even hinder the planned conduct of your work. First, this link must be mutual—otherwise, what sort of a link is it? Secondly, you must think about that particular industry which more than any other needs your help, that is, the medical industry."

What he was saying was completely new to me and I was hearing the words "medical industry" for the first time.

"You may answer that such an industry doesn't exist," the President went on. "But it does exist, though in a primitive state. I'm not at all closely in touch with this matter, but it seems to me.... You see, we already possess medicines which we ought to put into mass production. Just lately, for instance, I heard that one of our laboratories has created a drug which acts wonderfully on pneumonia cases. But it's difficult to obtain it, almost impossible."

"As far as a medical industry is concerned," said Grandad, "I think that although these two ideas have never in the history of mankind been joined together there seems to be a very promising field before it. But I can't see chemists' shops putting out all these lysozymes, anti-microbial phages, and other drugs. To prepare them they would need complicated installations such as those which have been set up in Tatyana Petrovna's laboratory?"

"Good for you, Grandad!" I thought with enthusiasm.

"And then again, we mustn't forget that all this is only the beginning. Ever since chemistry broke imperiously into the sphere of biology, we have been on the eve of the creation of biochemical drugs, which will probably change the very methods of practical medicine. Let me mention again that Tatyana Petrovna's laboratory is working successfully in just that direction...."

As I now call back to mind that interview with the President, I am surer than ever that it was certainly not the mere logic of our arguments that convinced him: in questioning me about the work of our lab, he tried to look at the matter through my eyes. When he learnt that the Commissar had signed the order he tried to evaluate the issue from the Commissar's point of view. The moment I mentioned Kramov, he raised his eyebrows and, glancing at me over his spectacles, asked Nikolai Lvovich about him. Grandad, narrowing his eyes shrewdly, answered that Kramov was an outstanding Soviet microbiologist, and that his scientific services were undoubtedly very valuable.

The President pondered. I was sure that he understood very well why I had come to him with Nikolai Lvovich and not with the director of my Institute, and that he was intentionally passing over this aspect of the matter. I could sense his enormous experience of handling people in all that he said and in the very way in which he listened, was silent, or put his questions.

He lifted the receiver and asked to be connected with the People's Commissar of Public Health. Grandad looked at me and moved his lips meaningly.

It was a brief conversation. The President at first said, "Yes, yes," but later said, "No" and firmly supported our request.

"This laboratory, you see, is a medical one and its task is the creation of new medicines. I don't think this side of the question can be overlooked. I should have considered it necessary to send a commission to the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes.... Well, thank you."

He put the receiver down.

"I hope that everything will be arranged," he said, "and that we shall yet hear of more than one useful medicine created by the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes. Is there anything else I can do to help you?"

I wanted to ask him about another matter, but Grandad was rubbing his spectacles with his handkerchief with such an impassive air, while not looking at me, that I thanked the President and got up to go....

* * *

The commission arrived two days later. Though not large it was weighty, in that one of its members was the Deputy People's Commissar himself. A few days before I had invited him to a celebration of the fifth anniversary of our laboratory.

"It looks as though we'll have to take your proposal seriously," he said with a smile when Rubakin and I met him in the hall.

For the first time these people had an opportunity to consider our arguments, which in the Commissariat office had inevitably seemed abstract, in their real, material setting. We explained to them how the apparatus for refining phage worked and offered complicated equipment for their inspection, equipment which we had set up with our own hands. The second member of the commission, a manager, asked whether it was possible to dismantle our installations. I replied that it was possible, but that this would be equivalent to completely destroying them.

For some reason, the commission didn't want to look at the figures we had prepared showing the inexpediency from the economic standpoint of transferring the laboratory to the Fisheries Trust. Nevertheless, seizing my opportunity, I slipped the paper with these figures into an outside pocket of the manager's jacket, and when this action of mine produced a laugh from this somewhat gloomy man, I told him that our entire lab, the whole lot of us, had sat over these financial accounts a whole night and that he ought, if only out of respect for other people's work, to have a look at them.

Eventually the commission went away and a period of expectation began for us.

Agnia Petrovna phoned me from home to summon me to dinner, but I didn't go, though as I worked my fingers were all thumbs. Victor came bringing me some problem of his, but though I listened I didn't understand what he was saying. Colleagues from other departments kept calling on us, and at last I locked myself in; I was tired of discussing something which no longer depended on our wishes.

Probably it was just auto-suggestion, but every quarter of an hour I caught myself standing at the window and staring out at the Fisheries Trust's empty barrels, which as before were standing in the Institute yard with a sort of expectant look. Did I hope in the depth of my heart that this packing material would disappear if I kept looking at it so persistently? Anyway, the packing material didn't disappear, and no answer came, though the members of the commission had promised that they would present their views to the People's Commissar that very day, or, at the latest, the following day.

Andrei phoned to ask how things were going. I said they were going badly. He told me off, and I felt a little easier.

At nine that evening Ilya Terentyevich came to call me to an Institute conference which had quite slipped from my memory. At this conference Dogadov was due to read his routine paper on what Davaine, Debray, Dubos and Folet thought about the evolution of infectious diseases. I sent my people along but didn't go myself, giving as my excuse that I had a severe headache, which was quite true.

We had done everything that needed to be done, I thought, and yet, as I paced the room, it was with a somehow guilty look that I glanced at my apparatus.

Ilya Terentyevich came back.

"The director's asking for you urgently," he said.

Oh hell, what a rotten business it was. But I had to restrain my feelings somehow, and I sat at the table for a moment or two, trying to master my strongly-beating heart.

Kramov insisted strictly that his staff should attend the lectures given by his closest pupils. I found nothing surprising, therefore, in the fact that the library where the conferences were usually held was full, nor in the fact that he'd sent for me twice. But when I entered, a general stir ran along the rows of chairs placed closely one behind the other in the little reading-room. Everybody turned towards me and hardly had I asked somebody, "What's happened?" than applause broke out, which grew louder when Kramov joined in it.

"Comrades, today I ought to hand over my portfolio as director to Tatyana Petrovna," he said, very calmly. "She has secured the cancellation of the order which was to have taken from us an important part of our building. The cancellation of this order, moreover, allows us to retain within the structure of our Institute one of the best of our laboratories. You all know the profound regret with which we were forced to apply for the transfer of Tatyana Petrovna's laboratory to the Fisheries Trust. The altered circumstances now make it fully possible for us to retain this laboratory as part of our Institute. It remains only for me to hope that the remarkable energy which Tatyana Petrovna has displayed in this difficult affair may be carried over into the work which is successfully proceeding under her leadership. For my part, I have promised the People's Commissar, who has just congratulated me on the successful settlement of the conflict, that I shall contribute, to the full extent of my powers and abilities, to the solution of the important and interesting tasks which confront the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes."

## THE MAIN THING LIES AHEAD

It had been a hard, wearying day. The previous day the director had assigned two more rooms to our laboratory and we had begun our "occupation" of them at eight in the morning, having decided, to preclude any eventuality, not to postpone this. The task turned out to be a complicated one, mainly because Kochergin, the head of our administrative department, who cherished a project of setting up a control point in one of our rooms, had set himself to haggle with me over every table and chair. It was no good my pointing out that as the Institute had only four cars at its disposal it had no need of a control point, and vain for me to show that motor transport should serve the cause of science in this case and not the other way round. The administrative chief stood firm and I had to have a stand-up fight with him in the director's office, after which the new rooms were furnished more or less decently and one good cupboard was transferred to us from Kochergin's own office....

Though I was busy, from time to time I remembered Mitya with a feeling of pain. I had frequently been to see him during the previous few days, and we had had long talks, recalling and re-appraising many things. He was leaving for Rostov, to enter the department of microbiology in the medical institute there. Not once, as though by agreement, did we even mention Glafirà Sergeyevna's name. Now I was afraid that Andrei might accidentally touch on this sore spot, and once again the conversation would begin in which Mitya argued that it was completely impossible for him to live without this woman and we that it was quite possible and even necessary.

At six that evening—the Rostov train was due to leave at 9.40—I went round to Mitya's, and from the first I realized that my fears had been quite groundless. The brothers were arguing, but the subject of their argument was utterly remote from Mitya's unfortunate "headache." Their conversation ran upon the way scientific research should be organized in medical institutes.

"But all the same there's something wrong in your plan of work; or rather, not so much wrong as contrived; and it's very easy to make a mistake because it's contrived rather skilfully." Andrei's expression was stern and keen, as always when he encountered anything indefinite or unclear. "And I think you've contrived it because you consider work in the department as somehow of second-rate importance compared with research. You think that a department is something which can take care of itself, with the minimum effort, whereas in fact...."

"Not at all. My intention is to devote myself first and foremost to the department."

"There's an error in that 'first and foremost' of yours, too," Andrei replied. "You'll organize the department and then you'll find some rabbit-fever or something to busy yourself with, and your lectures will be word for word the same year after year."

"What's your view, then; that I should turn myself into a Perov?"

Perov was a popularizer of science well known at that time, who used to travel around the country giving brilliant but superficial lectures on topical medical subjects.

"Well, that danger, apparently, has been escaped," Andrei replied sternly. "I'm talking about something different. Why do I think that you shouldn't in any circumstances separate your work in the department from your research? Because in the department every day you'll meet young people, who will want to know how research must be carried on, and they'll compel you to think often about that question. You must always demand a great deal of yourself, Mitya! Are you angry with me?"

"What's up with you; are you crazy?"

"You see, I'm trying to convince you that the department is a very vital thing."

"You're wasting your time. Research into rabbit-fever, from which thousands are suffering, is also a vital matter."

"That's true. Yet, if you don't link up the department with research, that will be a mistake which will bring in its train other, still more serious mistakes."

I was occupied with a different, quite private problem, namely, to what extent the professor-to-be was supplied with bed-linen, and did not hear the further stages of the argument. The professor was inadequately supplied both with bed-linen and other linen, I found, and as I got it together for the journey I heartily cursed the unworthy woman to whom he was so deeply and tenderly devoted. . . .

* * *

Mitya's room remained his under the agreement he had made, and he offered it to Rubakin, who was living "behind the stove," as he put it, in a large and noisy communal flat. Lena was also living in an unsatisfactory room which belonged to the Botkin Hospital, where she had not been working since she came to our Institute. As soon as the problems of Mitya's move had been dealt with, therefore, I went to see Lena without delay. She listened to what I had to say and then shrugged in an embarrassed manner.

"But Petya's already settled it with Dmitri Dmitriyevich, hasn't he?"

"Pyotr Nikolayevich has a room, a bad room true, but they'll chuck you out within six months at the latest."

Lena laughed uncertainly.

"I'll manage somehow."

I winked. She fell upon me, shook me by the shoulders, threatened me ("Now, not a word to anyone, mind you!") and gave me a kiss....

Andrei and I had counted on Mitya's colleagues coming to the railway station in force, but in fact only two came. They were talking in whispers and looking round all the time; evidently, somebody else should have come and hadn't. Mitya joked with them, but his strained humour showed that he was hurt, even insulted. Agnia Petrovna tried to persuade him to take some pasties to eat on the journey, but he refused with irritation. After that, until the train departed, she stood silent, angry, haughty and wrapped up to her very nose, for the day was a frosty one. In short, Mitya's seeing-off was not a happy one.

We went straight back from the station to Crimea Square. Mitya had asked us to take some things out of his room and Rubakin and Lena went along with us. They stopped the taxi outside "Food-Store No. 2," asked us to wait, and came back within half an hour laden with a huge quantity of bottles and parcels.

It wasn't hard to guess the reason behind this mysterious behaviour, but Andrei and I put on an act, asking them gravely and meticulously what it was all about. "Tell us, comrades, which of you has a birthday?" "Neither of us; our birthdays are both in the spring." "Is it that Pyotr Nikolayevich's book has been published?" "How could that be, when it's only just gone to the printer?" "Is it for a house-warming?" "How could that be? The room remains Dmitri Dmitriyevich's."

"Oh, I'm getting bored with them," said Lena at last. "Shall we tell them, Petya?"

He laughed.

"Oh, you simple soul. Don't you see they're pulling our legs?"

To be brief, when the taxi stopped at Crimea Bridge all that remained was to congratulate the newly-weds, who were newly wed in the full sense of the word, having registered only two hours before at the Register office.

I looked around me with surprise that evening. How rapidly a new life was beginning in Mitya's deserted, wrecked home! Lena sat there, pink-cheeked, happy, prettier than before, and as I looked at her I remembered for some reason how we had floated down the Volga, endless caravans of grain passing us in boats, steamers, and flat-bottomed barges. Together with this memory, a happy feeling of serenity, pride, and confidence in the coming day enveloped me, a feeling which it's beyond my power to convey. The main thing lay ahead, and before reaching its summit many painful roads, leading up steep, crumbling slopes, would still have to be traversed. But the foot of the mountain, covered with unfriendly and prickly vegetation, was already left far behind us, and already a cool strip of sea could be seen from a high pass. We could breathe easily; the blank ravines and tempestuous mountain streams were frightening no longer....

## *Chapter IV*

## SEARCH

### TEARS

I knew that his work, which was purely administrative, weighed heavily on Andrei. He was an epidemiologist by character and by the cast of his mind. He knew how to go into the smallest details so as by a series of subtle hypotheses to determine the cause of the outbreak of an epidemic. He was interested in the evolution of infectious diseases and in methods of combating and overcoming them. This did not prevent him, however, from persuading the Moscow Soviet to hand over the biggest dispensary in Sokolniki to the builders of the Metro; fifty-five surgeries were opened in this building, and the best doctors in Moscow came there to treat the Metro workers. He organized a medical-aid station in every pit and division on the line, including underground ones in the underground workings. Cases of air-embolism, which is what they call the disease contracted by tunnellers working with compressed air in hermetically-sealed caissons, practically ceased after Andrei's arrival; he arranged for special rest-places to be established near the shafts, with bunks, hot coffee, and duty nurses.

But he could not do epidemiological work while on the Metro-building job, and when he argued about how scientific research should be conducted I felt all the time that he was unhappy about this, because he was not in a position to demonstrate in practice that his ideas were right. He couldn't help putting himself in my place and saying that he would have done this or that quite differently.

On the day I'm talking about we had quarrelled, and, as always happens, mixed up with the main issue there were some trivial things which we both tried to ignore, but about which we nevertheless talked more than anything else.

Andrei criticized me for too often grouping facts together without trying to find the basis underlying them, for not being able to raise "accidental" facts to the level of phenomena.

"What does most of the work you do consist of? First, pursuit of an unusual fact. Second, attempts to reproduce this fact repeatedly. Then begins what I would boldly call making the fact into a fetish. You accord more importance to it than it's worth. And it all happens merely because you don't think out what your point of departure is."

I came back at him, and this argument, which stirred us deeply because it concerned the most important thing in life, work, at last ended in a quarrel....

Pavlik was already out for a walk with Agnia Petrovna. I dressed, went to look for them on the boulevard, couldn't find them, and went along to the Institute, though there was still a long time to go before ten o'clock. Ilya Terentyevich was putting the laboratory in order and we chatted a little about the weather and about children, for I knew that he was proud of his children. Then he went away and I was left alone.

I was depressed. Andrei and I had quarrelled before—for instance, when he had criticized me for not doing much reading, and I had got angry with him for not noticing that if everything in our home was to be the way we both wanted it, then I had to devote a lot of effort and trouble to working on it. This day's quarrel seemed quite a different affair, as though something had changed at the very roots of the relationship between us.

Voices could be heard in the next room. Lena had arrived. Kolomnin, as always before starting work, spent a long time thoroughly washing his hands. Meanwhile, I still sat thinking about Andrei. How attentive, tender, thoughtful he used to be! I used to love it when he teased me a little, exaggerating something in a funny way or being comically surprised by the "depth" of my observations. And many other incidents came to my mind; he had grown inattentive, forgetful, ready to take too much for granted.

It was true that he came home late, he was tired and went off to sleep when his head had hardly touched the pillow, but he always used to say good night to me, and lately he had stopped doing this.

When our findings in relation to lysozyme had been confirmed in other laboratories, and the Rubakins had brought cakes and wine for a celebration, he had spent ten minutes with us and then gone away, though he couldn't help seeing that I didn't want him to go.

But perhaps it was my own fault that he had changed so much in his attitude to me?

"... It hasn't been proved, because nobody has seriously investigated the natural resistance of the tissue," said Victor loudly, in the next room. "And just think, Ivan Sergeyevich, what conclusions can be drawn from the mere fact of its having been shown under the microscope that the action of lysozyme and of bacteriophage are amazingly similar."

That was an interesting comparison, and I involuntarily thought that if it happened under the microscope, then, perhaps, clinically, too.... But first I must clear up what had happened to Andrei.

"Yes, he's changed in his attitude to me," I went on thinking, trying at the same time to hold back my rising tears. "And what's most horrible of all is that he himself doesn't realize it. Or does he?"

And then I recalled, heaven knows why, how, soon after we were married, we had gone off following our noses and landed up at Askania Nova, and how we had spent an entire day wandering about in Askania Park. What a wonderful, shady, spacious park it was! What avenues, made lovelier by the golden tracery of the sunlight! And what a delight it had been to stroll there with Andrei, who at first laughed at my ignorance (I mixed up our Russian steppe-marmot with some animal from abroad) but later on began to put a ruthlessly real basis under my "poetry." A golden hen-pheasant had come towards us. I said that she was like a picture come to life and Andrei agreed, but then said that this pheasant was a hybrid and, as such, infertile. On the far side of the ponds we had come upon some tousled, funny-looking ostriches and I had regretted that we hadn't a camera with us, and he agreed that that was a pity, indeed, as otherwise I could have had as a memento of Askania Park an interesting photo showing ostriches with rickets. The ostriches' knees were swollen, and Andrei explained that this was undoubtedly due to rickets.

"... In that case, why does lysozyme extracted from heart muscle inhibit the growth of intestinal bacilli?" Victor was still at it, undaunted, in the next room. "Whereas lysozyme from egg-white doesn't inhibit them?"

"That's rubbish, Victor," Kolomnin answered angrily.

"Rubbish, eh? But do you want me to prove to you, Ivan Petrovich, that lysozyme from caviare acts best of all precisely on caviare microflora?"

"There now! And lysozyme from horse-radish acts best on diseases of horse-radish, I suppose?"

To this day I don't know why just at that moment it occurred to me that one ought to check whether there was lysozyme in tears, perhaps it was because I couldn't hold back my tears any longer and they began to drip on to the kymograms lying on my table. There was nothing out of the ordinary in this simple idea, especially as we had already by this time obtained lysozyme from so many sources—from saliva and from phlegm, from serum and from nose-mucus! But this idea was immediately followed by another, which impelled me hastily to apply an empty test-tube to my cheek so that the tears dripped into it instead of on to the table. "Suppose Victor's right and the lysozyme from caviare acts best of all on microflora of caviare; then. . ." (the tears began to fall less quickly) ". . . then lysozyme obtained from tears ought to act upon eye-diseases?" The tears had quite stopped falling now, just when I needed them desperately. I began to rub my eyes, so that Lena, who came in to see me, stopped on the threshold in amazement.

"What are you doing?"

I replied curtly.

"Nothing special. Just obtaining tears. . . ."

Andrei phoned within an hour, and I didn't grasp at once what he was talking about and why his voice sounded so miserable.

"Tanyusha, darling, don't be angry with me. It was stupid of us to quarrel."

"No, it wasn't. But never mind. I love you."

"I love you, too. Tell me, are you listening to the wireless there?"

"What's happened?"

"They've just announced that Chkalov has set off on a flight across the Arctic from Moscow to Petropavlovsk."

And Andrei read me the first radiogram received from "ANT-25" as it flew over the Barents Sea.

## THE FLIGHT

The following day everyone in our lab was busy with a task which at first sight may seem strange: we were collecting tears. As, alas, none of us had any serious causes of grief, we had to think of other methods, such as blinking, strained staring, and so forth. We convinced ourselves very soon that tears contain lysozyme. But do they act upon microflora of the eye? While examining this problem we kept our eye on the clock, because every three hours the co-ordinates of the flight were given over the wireless.

On our tables lay a copy of the plan of the route, cut from *Pravda*, and after each of the wireless messages (which regularly began with the words: "All's well") we rushed to the plan and marked the latest point reached by the expedition.

By evening the whole Institute was talking about what the take-off had been like and what the aims of the fliers were, and also about something which we only now understood: why *Pravda* had carried a few days previously a photo showing Stalin in conversation with the test-pilot Chkalov on Tushino Aerodrome.

When he came home, at midnight, Andrei said that they were then flying over Franz Josef Land at a height of nine thousand feet, and had a very awkward lap of their flight before them.

"Do you know why this is such a damned difficult lap? Because until they get to the mainland again there's practically nowhere they can land their aircraft!"

We didn't feel like sleeping and so we went on talking, but not about the flight.

"So you've been angry with me these last few days? Oh, I'm a swine," said Andrei, profoundly contrite. "And I was thinking that you'd got stuck so deep into your work that you'd forgotten about me altogether. That's why we ought always to argue things out to the end, till it becomes clear that I can't live without you. But we haven't the time, and so we separate or go to sleep without finishing our argument."

He went to the window.

"Look what a lovely night it is."

The night was a bright and gentle one, unlike the usual July night when the stones warmed by the sun during the day give off their heat and the closeness doesn't pass until dawn. From our window we could see the tops of the trees on the Leningrad Highway, and we stood for a long time at our window, gazing at those tree-tops as they faintly stirred before the breeze.

"Shall we go for a walk?"

Very quietly, so as not to wake up Agnia Petrovna, we opened the door, went down the stairs and out into the highway.

"Where shall we go?" Andrei asked.

I waved my hand vaguely and we walked to Mayakovsky Square, then along Sadovaya Street. We sat down in the garden in Insurrection Square and then it was my turn to ask:

"Where?"

This time it was Andrei who waved his hand vaguely and we wandered off we didn't know where to. It didn't matter, because everywhere there was this gentle night with the bright crescent moon gliding lightly along behind faint clouds, everywhere there was Moscow and everywhere people were talking about Chkalov, whose flight was carrying him further and further away.

* * *

Those years saw Moscow being built up on a grand scale. It was still strange to come out into Sokolniki and be surprised to find that those long rows of little wooden houses were also Moscow, then to go underground, into the Metro, and discover that Moscow meant spacious halls, brightly lit by frosted globes, with long colonnades of grey marble, and trains glittering with nickel and glass coming out of the tunnels. The Mokhovaya laid with asphalt was still an unfamiliar spectacle. New Square had quite recently been transformed from a narrow crossroads intersected by tram-lines into a really spacious new square. Along the Moskva stretched granite embankments with steps leading down to the river. The Moskvoretsky Bridge had just been thrown across the river, and Moscovites were still walking along it to feast their eyes on its milky lamps, its pavements three yards wide and its massive parapet of pale pink granite. Moscow, like a very tall man who has been standing for a long time in a stooping posture, began to straighten up, to lift its head, to square its shoulders....

As a youth Andrei had written of Moscow that he wanted to live there because it was a city where something great was accomplished almost every day, and this came back to me on that memorable July night. Moscow was in construction: this was more noticeable by night than by day, when the movement and noise of the building sites were drowned by those of the streets. Suddenly, from under the ground, workers from the Metro building job appeared, and walked down the street talking together in loud voices, like masters of the city, wearing their jackets with hoods thrown back and rubber boots reaching above the knee. On the Kremlin Embankment bricklayers were at work under the bright glare of searchlights. In Okhotny Ryad a house was being built; from behind the high fence we heard voices, the sound of hammering and, from time to time, something heavy falling with a sudden thud. Polished slabs of dark-red stone passed in trucks along Gazetny Lane, gleaming suddenly in the light of a street lamp.

And everywhere people were talking about Chkalov, about the flight, about what reserves of fuel he had, saying that while here summer was in full swing, where "ANT-25" was flying the polar summer was only just beginning.

In Pimenovsky Lane a woman was handing out loaves on a tray from the window of a semi-basement and workers were loading them into a van. In this place, too, with its appetizing smell of bread, and so cosily lit by the light falling from the bakery, they were talking about the flight. The woman asked what it meant when they said, "We are steering by the sun towards Cape Chelyuskin." The porters didn't know. Andrei explained it, and nobody was in the least surprised that a stranger, hatless, with his jacket thrown round his shoulders, should be explaining in the street, at three o'clock in the morning, what "steering by the sun" meant, where Cape Chelyuskin was and what were the scientific aims which the fliers had set themselves.

"What do you mean, aims? They're out to break the record!" said the van-driver, returning from somewhere or other; and Andrei and I explained that it was not only a matter of record-breaking, though that, of course, was important, too.

"By this flight they are solving dozens of problems at once," said Andrei. "First of all, they'll open up a Great Northern Air Route, succeeding the Great Northern Sea Route. Secondly. . . ."

A woman came out of the bakery, then another; a thickset fellow who had been asleep in the cab of the van woke up, got out, and sat on the footboard.

"But this still isn't all, and the main thing is that now the uninhabited districts of Northern Yakutia will be brought to life," Andrei went on, forgetting that a moment previously he had said that the main thing was something else. "Not only Yakutia, either. . . ."

"The communiqué," said the thickset fellow lightly jumping down into the roadway. Everybody rushed into the bakery, where workers in floury overalls were standing under a black wireless-relay speaker.

". . . At 2.10 the plane approached a cyclone which enveloped the whole area of Novaya Zemlya. Avoiding the cyclone, the plane changed course and, in very difficult weather conditions, headed for Tiksi Bay. . . ."

* * *

The next day (it was July 21st) was like a day only because it was light; in every other respect it was extraordinarily like the previous night. Everyone worked with enthusiasm and the work went ahead, though the previous day's tears, gathered with so much effort, seemed to amount to very little, and we had to resort to a more active method of obtaining them, smelling horse-radish. Discussion of my hypothesis continued, and Victor put forward the proposition that lysozyme is found in all organs and tissues of the body. We met this bold notion with a burst of laughter, which was unjust, because two or three years later it turned out to be correct.

Everything we did or talked about was connected in some way, unclear but certain, with "ANT-25," which was already over the Laptev Sea and was still flying further and further away.

That evening a wireless message was read which said: "Flying through a fog and getting covered with ice."

"Oh dear, I do wish they'd arrive soon, there'll be no peace till they do," said Lena with a sigh, glancing at me. "How much of the route have they covered so far?"

"I don't know. I only hope they'll cross the Sea of Okhotsk safely."

"You said Novaya Zemlya was the most dangerous place, but now it seems it's the Sea of Okhotsk."

"Well, what can I do about it, Lenochka?"

"I know you can't do anything about it. I only said that the most dangerous place seems somehow to be shifting further and further away."

"Not at all. They said themselves before the take-off that the Sea of Okhotsk would be the most dangerous lap of their flight."

* * *

It happened on the morning of 22nd of July. Melkova, from Krupensky's lab, a plump, coquettish girl, always well-groomed, flew into our lab without knocking, dropping hairpins as she came, her coat flying open, and cried:

"They've come down on Udd Island!"

We rushed to the wireless and heard: "Having successfully reached Petropavlovsk, the aeroplane dropped a message-bag over the town and made for Nikolayevsk on the Amur. At 11.10 a. m. Chkalov landed his aircraft on the small island of Udd. He is in good health and his aircraft in good condition."

* * *

"No, whatever you say, these have been extraordinary days," said Andrei next morning. "Suddenly it seemed as though everything was linked up with Chkalov—not in fact, but in another and deeper sense.... Do you know what I mean?" he added suddenly, inspired. "You see, it's the happiness that makes you go dizzy when you look at something new, which never has been or could have been before in the world. What are you staring at?"

"Nothing. Just listening."

"The whole country is on the wing, that's why everybody reacted like that to this expedition. Yes, that's it. Just think what's happening in the scientific field. Isayev destroying dracontiasis for ever in Bukhara—dracontiasis, from which people have been suffering for thousands of years; Filatov restoring the sight of the blind with the help of a little piece of frozen tissue. Aren't things like these flights over boundless expanses where never a living soul has been before?"

He sat on the bed with his shirt unfastened, his hair untidy, his eyes shining.

"It's not only a victory over great distances, it's a leap from one quality to another. Don't you agree?"

"It would be interesting to know how old Chkalov is. I always feel that Victor is a bit like him, though he's only twenty-four."

We parted without finishing our conversation, for it was time to be at the Institute. But in the lab, too, where we felt the cheerful tension of work, and again in the evening at a meeting of the Society of Microbiologists at which Academician Kladnev read a paper on the progress of industrial and agricultural microbiology, I went back in my mind to this conversation. "That's it—searching for new, unknown facts, persistently demanding the explanation of them, and then searching again, until one has in one's hands the key which opens everything. And then—a leap like Chkalov's from Moscow to Petropavlovsk."

Kladnev spoke about how the advance of agriculture was opening new paths for microbiology of the soil. He mentioned that a microbiology of milk, of flax, of ensilage had been created, and that in spheres until recently considered quite inaccessible to the influence of benign microbes their benefits were now beginning to be doubly and trebly felt. As I listened to him I thought with annoyance what a small place the four rooms of our lab occupied in the huge house of Soviet science. "Yes, persistent, tireless work, and then suddenly a tremendous step forward, prepared by years of effort. . . ."

". . . Science demands from a man the whole of his life. . ." wrote Pavlov in his letter to young people. "Be passionate in your work and in your researches." That was it—a flight over unknown spaces, where never a living soul had been before.

We have dodged the cyclone, we are covered with ice, in a fog. Without sleep or rest. Outstripping time. In order to achieve what nobody in the world has done before.

## GREAT CHANGES

As I mentioned, representatives of four special sciences worked in our lab, and we regulated the use of our "living space" accordingly. It was laid down that nobody was allowed to smoke in the bacteriological room, because some infectious substance might get on to the cigarette. Where the biochemists worked people chattered and smoked freely, not, of course, because this science intrinsically lends itself to such pastimes, but because there they didn't have cats mewing, as was the case with the pharmacologists, and also they had a comfortable leather sofa which I had extracted with difficulty from our administrator. It was in this room that Victor every week threatened to turn all contemporary biology topsy-turvy, while Ivan Sergeyevich Kolomnin, without removing his little pipe from his mouth, reduced to nothing his grandiose generalizations.

A year had passed since the time when the battle for the lab had ended in our triumph. It had been a year in which old colleagues had gradually got used to new ones and vice versa. Kolomnin was the hardest case of all; not only because of his disagreeable personality, but because he worked as though those around him were not living people but machines carrying out this or that operation which was useful for the development of science. He was honest, precise, merciless to himself, and yet at the same time a foe to that community of scientific interests without which our lab, like any other, must remain lifeless and unproductive. "In science one must be interested in phenomena, not in people," he said to me one day, and merely raised his eyebrows ironically when Lena replied that man was the most valuable scientific phenomenon.

All through that year we were, so to speak, walking around Ivan Sergeyevich, trying to understand him, and, if we could, to make him fit in.

Grandad, in his fundamental report at the Rostov Conference, spoke highly of one of Kolomnin's works. By the embarrassed smile with which Ivan Sergeyevich took off his glasses and, as though waking up, passed his hand over his dry, yellow face, I realized that in the past he had been deeply hurt by the lack of recognition of his services to science. From then on, at all conferences, whether at the Institute or at the Health Commissariat, I made a point of mentioning these services, and I don't think that the work of our lab suffered any harm from the fact that every time I spoke I perhaps exaggerated the importance of these services a little.

Katya Dimant was often ill and unable to do much work. Lena, on the other hand, worked with passion. The idea of "dash" is hardly applicable to scientific work, but it was just that word which always came to my mind when, lively, gay, good-looking, she flew into our lab putting on her lab coat as she came. Up to that time she had proceeded by plodding straight ahead, without looking for roundabout paths. But now inventiveness, even cunning, had appeared in her from somewhere. She loved to busy herself with testing the toxicity of preparations, and achieved in this difficult work that "beauty" of which Lavrov liked to talk. Her records, too, were exact and exceptionally neat.

But it was in Victor that we noticed the most marked progress. His talent reminded me of Mitya, but he was not at all inclined to hurl his sometimes brilliant generalizations to the winds without following them up. Still a young man—he began working in Rubakin's lab when he was a second-year student—Victor was one of that race of true scientists who, in the words of Ivan Petrovich Pavlov, would gladly devote to science not only one life but two lives, if they had them. He was good-looking—tall, fair-haired, with impetuous gestures and a thin, pleasant face. Girls looked at him, but what was the use? All that was postponed "till later" and meanwhile ... what could compare with his selfless devotion to work? Always and everywhere he was reading, he argued passionately, he was quick-tempered but as easily appeased as a child. In short, we looked upon this young man with complete justification as the hope of our Institute.

* * *

It had seemed impossible that I should ever get used to this smooth, guarded attitude of his. But the years passed, and if I didn't get used to it, at least I learnt to fight down the instinctive feeling of hostility which Kramov always aroused in me. Did he know how I felt towards him? Undoubtedly he did, but he explained it to himself in a special way, which was typical of him. Occasionally at first, then with increasing frequency my humble name began to appear in his papers and addresses and speeches, or if not mine then Kolomnin's, Victor's or Lena's.... When Dogadov spoke in opposition to me on the Academic Council, the director, to everyone's surprise, firmly supported my point of view. The question at issue, however, was an unimportant one. "*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*" was Kolomnin's observation about this incident; he was a little proud of his knowledge of Latin. "I fear the Greeks even when they bring gifts." Still, these were "gifts" of which we had long dreamed. During 1936 our lab was given some up-to-date equipment such as I had never dared to hint at. Where staff were concerned, however, it was not so easy.

"Pasteur had no more colleagues than you have, my dear Tatyana Petrovna," Kramov replied when I appealed to him to increase the establishment of our laboratory by two. And he added, without explaining what he meant, "It's early yet."

It remained "early" however, all through 1937 and 1938.

I should mention that at the time I am writing about, our relations had necessarily changed for yet another, very weighty reason. This was that not only our laboratory, but the whole Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes gradually began to occupy a less and less important place in Valentin Sergeyevich's life. Beginning roughly in the mid-1930's, Kramov's name was mentioned more and more frequently in the newspapers and periodicals. "Kramov's theory," "the work of the Kramov School," "the group of problems worked on by Kramov and his colleagues"—such expressions as these were repeated at every step in the specialist publications, whence they made their way into the general press, too.

At the end of 1936 Valentin Sergeyevich became director of another scientific institute. He was a member of the Research Council of the People's Commissariat of Public Health, which decided no question of any weight without him, especially if it was in any way a matter of general theory. His *Studies in Infection,* which already in the 1920's held a place of honour in the library of every working microbiologist, had been re-issued several times with corrections and additions. Underlying it was the Kramov theory of immunity, and Valentin Sergeyevich's pupils invariably declared in their articles that this theory should by rights occupy a very prominent position in Soviet science. A very prominent and ever more firmly established position was also occupied by the author of the theory, though new works from his pen appeared rather rarely.

What was the basis of the recognition which Kramov enjoyed? Why did journalists apply to Kramov on all microbiological questions—to Kramov and no one else? That was a mystery. It was that "magic" of his which we had bumped our heads against for the first time when we fought Valentin Sergeyevich's plan to turn our lab over to the Fisheries Trust.

I cannot say, however, that at that time I was very interested in this mystery. Kramov had long hindered our work, and it was difficult not to value the very real help which he was giving us now. Even the caustic Kolomnin, who one day calculated that Kramov's name had been mentioned eight times in the course of a single month in the pages of the *Medical Worker*, was forced to acknowledge that the director was showing particular respect to the work of our laboratory.

It sometimes happened now that when we met our talk ranged wider than Institute shop.

"Do you ever suffer from remorse, Tatyana Petrovna?" he asked me one day. "There are days when I just don't know where to hide from it. That shows, doesn't it, that in the last analysis, I'm not as bad as all that?"

He adjusted his pince-nez and sighed.

"There's nothing to be done about it! Emotions, I mean."

I cannot say whether these "emotions" were the reason why every month during the last few years new people had appeared in our Institute, all of whom affirmed in one way or another, openly or indirectly, that they had always been supporters of the Kramov theory.

Standing at the head of Valentin Sergeyevich's pupils both new and old was Krupensky; in fact, Kramov virtually left our Institute in his charge. He was Kramov's closest follower; not an abstracter submerged in the study of "corroborative experiments," like Belskaya, whom Kramov had fetched from Kazan, nor an abstract dogmatist like Dogadov, but a trusted lieutenant, the militant spokesman of the school, a scientist who published rarely but often spoke. He never missed a single meeting at which the Kramov theory could be mentioned, and there was something fanatical about the very pertinacity with which, a hundred times over, he expounded, developed, defended the work of his teacher, denouncing his opponents and ridiculing their objections.

Was he sincere? I don't know. Often in my conversations with Valentin Sergeyevich I had a queer feeling of coming up against some sort of scheming, complicated and speculative. When I listened to Krupensky's papers and speeches I had the same feeling, though it was less clear than with Kramov.

His external appearance was striking: a sharp, hook-nosed face with a quick, appraising glance, thin lips, narrow shoulders, a large head of hair, sticking up, which was beginning to go grey. But there was something narrow about him which sometimes openly asserted itself, and sometimes was glimpsed for a moment even in his movements as he rushed impetuously to the rostrum, nervously brushing his jacket, which was smeared with ash.

## SEARCH

We had long since realized that in our study of lysozyme we had burst into a new region and were flying, in Andrei's words, over wide tracts in the natural protection of the organism which were hitherto unknown to us. We had found lysozyme in the spleen and heart of fish and extracted it from milk, from skin and from cerebral membrane. We had discovered it in vegetables; including horse-radish, by the way, and it turned out that lysozyme from horse-radish was not inferior in its action upon microbes either to "tear" or "egg" lysozyme.

As we pondered on the "omnipresence" of this remarkable substance, things became much clearer to us when we turned our attention to some quite ordinary, widely-known and yet mysterious facts. Why does a dog whose paw is injured immediately and assiduously lick it? Because his saliva contains lysozyme. Why doesn't frog-spawn perish in stagnant ponds, where it is besieged by millions of invisible foes? Because it is securely protected by lysozyme.

A number of laboratories checked our work, brought it to greater exactness and considerably supplemented it, and it was shown that lysozyme acted in varying degrees upon the agents of typhus, paratyphoid, pneumonia, anthrax, dysentery, meningitis, and cholera. One might well suppose that the specific for all diseases, which had been dreamt of by doctors in the distant past, had at last been discovered. But in fact this was not so. Lysozyme acted on the agents of infectious diseases, but only in the test-tube and on the laboratory table. Trying to utilize it for the struggle against typhus, cholera or pneumonia was regarded by research workers as "trying to stop a tank attack with a squadron of cavalry."

I have taken this simile from Bystrova's paper at the Rostov Conference. Continuing the simile, she said that lysozyme was more like a frontier-guard unit, if we considered it as proved that it prevented the penetration of microbes into the external defences of the body.

* * *

What worker in theoretical medicine is not looking for the road, or at least the rough track, that leads to clinical practice, where the idea he has brought to maturity amid the dead glass of his laboratory may be applied for the benefit of living, suffering man? We had a glimpse of that track the day when I meditated on the protective properties of tears, and as we studied the new preparation we tried hard not to lose it in the dark forest of problems and clues which surrounded us. When we used it on rats suffering from keratitis (inflammation of the eye), lysozyme stood up to this first test. Lena Bystrova carried out the experiment:

she hated rats, but nevertheless for two weeks, with iron persistence, she washed their wicked little eyes with lysozyme. She repeated this experiment on rabbits infected with other and still severer eye diseases, and in ninety per cent of the cases the rabbits became able to see again as well as before they were infected.

This was one of those "bright" days in our lab and the reserved Kolomnin, puffing at his pipe, questioned Victor about his "affairs of the heart," Lena bought the very best cigarettes and Katya Dimant rushed into the neighbouring labs and told them about our success. The lysozyme-content of tears falls sharply in cases of eye disease; that was what became clear on that happy day. But did this happen only with eye diseases? Might not lysozyme also be used for treating diseases of the ear, throat, and nose?

I had just begun to suffer from sinus trouble, which was very lucky. My cheek-bones ached and I found it hard to breathe. Taking a few ampoules of lysozyme with me I went to see a doctor I knew, a noisy, grey-moustached, young-looking man named Martin Fomich Pushkov, who still looked youthful in spite of his sixty-odd years.

His surgery was in the clinic at Petrovskiye Vorota. Along its lengthy corridors wandered convalescents with happy, concentrated yet bored faces. The duty sister in her tall, smart, head-dress sat and wrote at a gleaming white table. As I glanced through the half-open doors of the wards, much that I had long forgotten came back to me, stirring me suddenly anew, strongly and deeply. How often had I, controlling my anxiety, approached a patient's bedside. How often had I witnessed the battle between life and death and myself taken part in this tense battle. How often, as I lay in bed at night, had I tried to solve the riddle of disease: every difficult case had seemed a riddle to me as a young doctor. Yes, that had been a very different life, venturesome and restless. And, sighing involuntarily, I thought about it as I felt for the little parcel with the ampoules of lysozyme which I had put in my hospital gown.

Pushkov greeted me in his loud way and pulled me into his study.

"I have a patient with me, or rather, a young patient, so I'll examine you after I have seen to him. It won't take long."

The young patient was a slim boy of fifteen, swarthy and dark-haired, with large eyes. He stood up when I entered the room, and greeted me shyly.

"Sit down, Kolya.... How are you, Tatyana Petrovna? Sinusitis, eh? Most likely, if you hadn't got that you'd never have remembered Pushkov." Then, putting on his brow a round mirror with a hole through the middle, he set himself to examine the boy. "What a sad business it is, upon my word. There's no such person as Pushkov the man, only Pushkov the doctor.... Did you come by yourself today, Kolya?" he asked the boy.

"Yes, Martin Fomich."

"Well, come again tomorrow, but not by yourself, bring your mother with you."

The boy thanked him and rose. Hanging his head he walked to the door, then stopped and turned round.

"Martin Fomich, can't you tell me?... You see, Mother.... It would be better if I were to tell her myself."

"What's the matter with you?" said Pushkov, affectionately. "Even if it turns out that you have to have another operation, what's so terrible about that? Have patience, my boy, that's the thing!" The boy raised his large, worried eyes and gazed at the doctor.

"But after the operation shall I.... Shall I be able.... Or...."

"Of course," said Pushkov quickly. "Now off you go, my lad."

He took the boy by the shoulders and led him to the door. Then he scratched the back of his head in a vexed way and sat down beside me on the sofa.

"Do you know who that boy is?" he said. "He's a marvellous violinist, the young hope of the Moscow Conservatoire. When he played at the coming-out concert the orchestra went wild with enthusiasm, they really did. Not just the public, the orchestra. And now, if you please, he's seriously ill, threatened with the loss of his hearing. Do you realize what it means to him?"

The boy, whose name was Kolya Lukyanov, had a fistula that wouldn't heal. I asked if there was any hope that a second operation would save his hearing.

"Who can say? But, as you see, he appreciates that the whole of his life will depend on the outcome of it. Just imagine how passionately he *doesn't want* this operation to happen. I'm sorry for the boy!"

"Could he get by without an operation?"

"If only he could! But we've tried everything and nothing does the trick.... Well, Tatyana Petrovna, what's your trouble?"

"Well, Martin Fomich, I'm ill. That's a fact. It's obviously sinusitis and you can have a look at my nose in a moment. But I've brought along a new preparation. Have you heard of lysozyme?"

"Of course I have; but since when has it been a preparation?"

Without answering, I unfolded and showed him a chart summarizing our experiments. He looked at it, then called the duty doctor, handed over his patients to him and said that he would not be able to see any more patients that day.

We not only drew up a plan of treatment but there and then put it into effect, since the patient (T. P. Vlasenkova) was at hand. Long swabs of cotton wool were placed in my nose, and I remained seated under the frosted bulb of the electric light in this undignified state for a good twenty minutes, while Martin Fomich, fingering his greying moustaches, which were yellow from tobacco smoke, closely studied our chart.

Then I placed the swabs in test-tubes so as to be able to make cultures when I returned to the lab, and took my leave of Pushkov.

"How much we need this, my dear Tatyana Petrovna," he said as he accompanied me to the door. "Our range of medicines is not large, our methods of treatment are old. And yet what insidious, unexpected things occur, if only you knew! Take post-influenzal complications alone.... Sometimes I tear my hair, believe me!"

We agreed that he would try out lysozyme on his patients. After returning to the Institute and handing over the swabs to my colleagues I went home and lay down because, in spite of the new method of treating sinusitis, I felt rather ill.

That evening I phoned Pushkov.

"Martin Fomich, why not try the preparation on that boy I saw at your place today? The pharmacological committee has authorized the testing of it. Lysozyme is perfectly harmless, you know, that's been shown by a good two hundred experiments on animals."

"And on one person."

"Yes, that's so. Will you try it?"

"Most certainly I will, Tatyana Petrovna; tomorrow. What do you think, shall I combine your preparation with a heat procedure?"

* * *

I didn't go to the doctor again, but instead watched the course of my illness quite satisfactorily with the help of the laboratory. Soon I was feeling better and this, apparently, was due not merely to my wanting it very much to happen, as Kolomnin said, with a grin; according to the findings of our laboratory, lysozyme ought to stop inflammation of the membrane, and that was just what happened with my sinusitis.

My case, however, was already not unique. Every two or three days I got on the phone to Pushkov and he spoke of the results which he was obtaining with the treatment, though cautiously, as "hopeful."

In any case, the first thing I did on returning to work was to take Lena Bystrova's data to the famous eye-specialist Averbakh. With him I went through my conversation with Pushkov over again, the only difference being that Averbakh asked me a number of searching questions as he studied the chart. My answers satisfied him, apparently, and he decided to test the new preparation at once at the Central Institute of Ophthalmology, which he directed.

. . . I had many times sat for examinations—at the Medical Institute, where at first I was very much afraid of them but later lost this fear, and where one might pass or fail; at the State Farm at the bedside of my first patient, where I could not allow myself to fail; and at the microbiological conference in 1933, where I read my first paper.

But what significance had those tests, whether important or not, in comparison with the responsible test to which our laboratory was being subjected in these anxious days?

An article disputing our data appeared in the *Journal of Epidemiology and Microbiology;* at the routine Institute conference Victor brilliantly proved that the writer of the article was poorly acquainted with the very nature of natural immunity. Research workers in one of the laboratories of the Central Institute of Experimental Medicine established that lysozyme derived from mother's milk was effective in preventing bowel disorders.

Our everyday, familiar work seemed to be following its usual course. But that was only appearance; in fact, our work had changed and become something different, unusual and new, if not for me then for those of my colleagues such as Victor, who had graduated in biology and had no idea of practical medicine. We visited clinics, had discussions with doctors, examined patients after the specialists had seen them, and when our plan of treatment had become a little clearer we explained in which cases lysozyme should be used.

We spent our evenings, until late into the night, studying the preliminary data from the clinics. Were there any collateral phenomena? Apparently there were not.

Victor phoned, excited because it had occurred to him that lysozyme from egg-white could be used to excellent effect in the treatment of burns. Kolomnin also phoned; he was racking his brains over a complex question of the chemical nature of lysozyme.

One of those evenings a woman I didn't know called on me. She was swarthy and wore a dark-coloured dress, and she told me that Dr. Pushkov had told her where I lived.

"You don't know me, but we. . . ." Before she said it I realized that she was Kolya Lukyanov's mother. The boy was very much like his mother.

"Well, how is he? Martin Fomich told me that he was better."

"He's more than better, he's quite recovered." She was very much moved. "You see, he. . . . Martin Fomich told you he's studying at the Conservatoire?"

"Yes, he did."

"Well, you see, we were in despair," she said in a rapid whisper, her eyes glistening with tears. "But now. . . . Thank you."

"And thank you."

We were silent, then suddenly embraced each other.

"Why do you thank me?"

"For having come to see me. You don't know how important it was for me and for us that your son Kolya should recover."

. . . It would be difficult to define the precise day and hour when our comparisons of laboratory data with clinical data, which always caused some agitation, became less anxious and more soothing, and at last strongly confirmed the irrefutable effectiveness of our preparation. It didn't come like a lightning flash, illuminating our modest laboratory with a dazzling glare of recognition, but unnoticed, gradually, in the course of everyday, patient labour. Columns of figures, which the day before had meant nothing, or almost nothing, became new facts which were to take a lasting place in medical practice.

The first fact was that the preventive application of lysozyme to the enormous number of patients available at the Central Institute of Ophthalmology had sharply reduced the number of post-operative disorders of the eye. The second was that our preparation was shown to be a good specific against creeping ulcer of the cornea, a grave disease which often ended in complete blindness. The third fact was that the activity of lysozyme had been demonstrated in the treatment of a great variety of diseases of the ear, nose, and throat, and that by its power to restore the normal working of the vocal cords it had been shown to be an indispensable medicine for singers. And that was far from all; but enough about lysozyme.

## Chapter V

## A SWIFT CURRENT

### ANDREI'S WORK

You may, perhaps, have thought as you read the last chapter that, sunk in my study of medicinal substances derived from bacteria and tissues, I had fallen into that "world of glass" against which Nikolai Vasilyevich had warned me when I was still a student. Fortunately I had not, but only because we had set ourselves practical aims. At Likhoslavl we carried out a successful experiment in speeding up the retting of flax. At Baku we busied ourselves with the process used in salting herrings. But this somewhat restless life I led, with its sorties into unknown fields of industry and medicine, could not even be compared with the intense and varied life which Andrei led. He had transferred in 1936 to the Sanitary and Epidemic Administration of the Public Health Commissariat, and threw himself headlong into the intricate work which had long fascinated him.

I had often noticed in the newspapers comparisons between the most peaceful of civilian institutions and military headquarters. An article about our Institute, published in the journal *Science and Life,* was called "The Headquarters of Biochemistry," for instance. But the Sanitary and Epidemic Administration really was like a military headquarters, especially in the pre-war years. The enemy might attack unexpectedly, either from the front or from the rear, and they had to guess his intentions and be able to forestall him with moves prepared in advance.

I shall come back to this comparison and then it will become clearer....

Usually when he returned from one of his missions, Andrei would tell me about it in detail, and that was always interesting because he invariably met a fresh mystery which he had to solve, no matter how difficult it was. Once, for instance, he ran into an epidemic of measles which was spreading from one small town in Kirov Region to another; he guessed the cause of the epidemic correctly when he noticed that it broke out within a definite period after the visits of a little travelling menagerie. The monkeys had measles and infected the children.

There were other mysteries, however, about which he said not a word when he returned to Moscow. He would come home silent, and by his abstractedness, his thoughtful manner and the noticeable effort it cost him while at home to try to forget about what had alarmed and disturbed him, I understood that this time it had been something very different from one of those accidental outbreaks which come of neglecting or violating the rules of sanitation.... Several years passed, for instance, before I learnt that in one large town in the South Andrei had helped to expose a complicated piece of sabotage in a meat-packing factory which had resulted in the deaths of many people.

At that time nobody yet supposed that bacteriological warfare could become a reality, but the bacteriological weapon had in fact already undergone its testing period, and it was not without reason that soon afterwards, at the Rostov Conference, Grandad indignantly denounced "the enemies of mankind who have transformed laboratories into arsenals for future wars."

To discover the secret ways in which this weapon was being used and to render it harmless; that was Andrei's work. He secured a laboratory in one of the institutes controlled by the Public Health Commissariat (he "grabbed" it, as he gleefully explained) and vigorously applied himself to seeking new means of combating parasitic typhus, malaria, and rabbit-fever.

Why did it take me so long to accept the idea that from the time when he transferred to the Sanitary and Epidemic Administration my life with Andrei had changed completely? Formerly I used to know that, however the day had gone and whatever I felt like when I left the lab, two or three hours would pass and then I'd tell Andrei all my joys and sorrows. We saw little of each other, and yet we had a genuine family life, made up of our everyday and not in the least wearisome cares about one another and about our son. We had a common feeling that our happiness had not been given us in vain, and this joyous feeling of conscious happiness lit up the life of our home.

Sometimes we would, as it were, exchange thoughts without speaking, or guess each other's thoughts, and when that happened we felt so close to each other in spirit that it flooded our hearts with joy. I knew very well when he loved me more than usual and when less, and learnt to wait patiently for the "less" periods to end. Even our rare quarrels, which I found especially painful because then I myself began to love Andrei less, contributed in some way to this feeling of something shared, without which neither he nor I could have been happy and at peace.

Now, however, the whole shape of our family life was entirely changed. It was true that Andrei, when he was in Moscow, returned from work a great deal earlier; but he was in Moscow very little, and his sudden departures, about which he himself, apparently, knew nothing beforehand, unsettled and upset me.

* * *

In people's family relationships, in the years they spend living together, there are periods when they are closer to each other and periods when they are not so close. They are less close when the even tenor of life gives an air of unchangingness and immobility to the relation between them; they come closer when life unexpectedly turns a sharp corner, and a feeling which has become habitual and settled is seen in a new light.

This change was still not clear, but already I noticed something new, unlike what used to be between us. Puzzled, I noted this feeling which kept coming into everything we thought and talked about.

I knew that I had no grounds for worry about him. He went off on the first day that an outbreak occurred, in order to prevent an epidemic. He was usually careful. Why, then, when I was left on my own, did I begin at once and persistently thinking about him? Why did I suddenly, without any reason, recall our youth, when I had doubted and tested myself, continually seeking in my heart that spark without which, I felt, there could be no real love? One night I got out of bed to re-read Koltsov's verse: "At the dawn of a misty youth"—I'd forgotten the second line, but the first had been ringing in my ears all the evening and had prevented me from going to sleep. It was as though my youthful confusion of feelings had returned again, and I was sometimes sad, sometimes gay. I felt ashamed of myself. I counted the days till his return.

Andrei saw and understood what was happening and responded joyously to this new feeling.

"Before, when we parted, I would suddenly realize sadly that I didn't remember you very well," he wrote. "Or rather, not you, but your eyes, your hair, the way you walk, your hands. But now something different has begun. Every now and again I catch myself in the silly thought that it can't be that you are you. Tell me, please, that small slim woman, fair, with dark eyes, whom I left yesterday on the station platform—was she you? That woman with the quick gestures of her little hands who made me laugh and then suddenly grew preoccupied and silent, hurt when I began to make fun of her?. . . The fields, which look so melancholy by night, rush past the window of my carriage, the huge distance between us becomes greater still with every passing minute, but you are with me as before and when I sleep you will be with me in my dreams. Perhaps it's a good thing that we part sometimes? Don't be angry with me! But when I'm at home, what I think about every minute when I'm away from you sometimes goes almost unnoticed. I see you now with your plaits done up for the night and I hear you say, 'Well, you've told me; now it's time to sleep. Don't forget, you must rest on your journey.' Yes, it's time. I love you.

"Your Andrei."

"P.S. Do you remember how you were frightened because I breathe so quietly when I'm asleep? My neighbour, who has been complaining all day that he suffers from insomnia, does not possess this praiseworthy characteristic, alas. Such a mighty, inspired, self-oblivious snore as his, I have never heard in all my life."

* * *

Usually when he set off he was preoccupied but gay, as though the prospect of a struggle against an epidemic somehow cheered him up in advance. Enthusiasm shone in his bright eyes, and it was evident that mentally he had already "rolled up his sleeves."

In Central Asia, in the Kara-Kum and in the Turkmenian steppes he fought against diseases which "flew on wings," against leishmaniasis, which was carried by one type of mosquito, and malaria, which was carried by another. He was keen on spraying from the air, carrying on the fight against the malarial mosquito from aeroplanes; hundreds of thousands of acres of marsh-land were sprayed under his direction. On one of the distant frontiers of the Soviet Union he organized a ruthless extermination of rats, the bearers of plague and typhus. He waged war on desert rats—rodents living in holes in the sand which were carriers of tick-borne recurrent typhus.... But I must tell about this in a little more detail.

* * *

There was nothing out of the ordinary in the fact that the train was late, yet it seemed to me to be connected in some way with the incomprehensible telegram which Malyshev, the head of the Sanitary and Epidemic Administration, had received from Andrei: "Don't inform home train 63 carriage 8." The number of the train had been garbled, evidently through the fault of the telegraph office. But why was I not to know of his return? Malyshev was as mystified as I was.

The eighth carriage was at the end of the train. Andrei had already alighted while we were running towards it, and I saw him from a distance amid the noisy crowd which was making its way along the platform.

"There he is!"

I turned to Malyshev, who hadn't kept up with me, and by his face, which was usually reserved but lit up at this moment, I realized that for him, as for me, it was a relief to see Andrei.

Andrei was carrying two cases; one was ours, the other was an unknown one, of an old-fashioned type, with bronze studs on it. His cap was pushed back from his brow and his mackintosh thrown over his shoulder. His face was flushed, his eyes shone. At first sight I thought he was sunburnt, refreshed....

"Andrei!"

He stopped, putting his cases down on the platform with such a joyful, amazed expression, as though it were something quite improbable that we should have come to meet him.

"Oh, how good of you! That's splendid of you," he said cheerfully, embracing me and looking me over as he always did after we'd been separated. "And you've got thinner, somehow. How's Pavlik? Hullo, Mikhail Alexeich!"

"Pavlik's all right. You'd get thinner here! What was the meaning of that absurd telegram Mikhail Alexeich had from you?"

He frowned slightly.

"Why absurd? Still, my head was aching yesterday, perhaps I did get it mixed up a bit. And as for the telegraph clerk, she was a good sport. I was in a hurry, I was afraid the train would leave without me, but she said, 'Why should I keep the change, even if it is only ten kopeks? Do you think I don't understand the responsibilities of State Service?' "

He laughed. I looked at Malyshev and he replied with an anxious, puzzled look.

"What's up with you, Andrei? Are you ill?"

"I? No. Why? Yesterday I had a bit of a headache, but today it's gone. I travelled with a couple of Armenians; one was an electrical engineer, the other a business executive. Marvellous chaps! Oh hell, I never said good-bye to them. Mikhail Alexeich, wait a bit!" he cried to Malyshev, who, leaving us on the steps, was going away to find his car. "I travelled with some Armenians, I must say good-bye to them."

Malyshev came back to me.

"It's too late now, don't you think?" he said slowly. "Come on, Andrei Dmitrich."

"I think you're right. What was it I had to tell you, Tanya? I can't remember. And yet all during the journey I was repeating it over and over in my head; I even tied a knot in my handkerchief to remember it. Now, when I meet you, I've forgotten what it was! Ah well, it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter, does it, Tanya?"

"Of course not."

I tried to speak calmly.

"Now we'll go home and you'll go to bed and rest. You must have caught a cold on the way."

"Caught a cold? Not a bit of it! What were we talking about? Oh, yes, about those Armenians. What people! Tanya, why don't you and I go away somewhere together. For instance, those chaps invited me to come to Erevan, not in the summer of course, but in the autumn, when it's not so hot. Has it been as hot as this for long here?"

It wasn't hot at all. The day was sunny but cool. Andrei impatiently threw his raincoat on to his other shoulder. His cheeks were burning. He hadn't improved in health, as I had thought at first; on the contrary, he had grown pinched and thin. As we got into the car, Malyshev helped me and stealthily pressed my hand to encourage me.

"Why are you so worried, Tanya? And you haven't told me anything about Pavlik. . . . By the way, I wanted to bring him some peaches, but Kapustin advised me against it. 'They'll spoil and you'll have to throw half of them away,' he said. Well, what if I did? Careful, there's something in there," said Andrei quickly to the driver, who was putting the unfamiliar leather case at our feet. "You wouldn't believe how I missed Pavlik! I was planning to take him to the circus. That's somebody I can't live without. I can't live without you either, but somehow that's in quite a different way."

I took his hand and put my lips to his brow.

"I'm fine, fine; why are you taking me home? To the Public Health Commissariat!" He had heard Malyshev, who was sitting next to the driver, give him our address.

"All right, Andrei Dmitrich," replied Malyshev, and he whispered something again to the driver.

"Oh, how good to be in Moscow!" said Andrei, looking around him with bright feverish eyes. We came out into Dzerzhinsky Square. "Driver, what type of car is this? New?"

"Yes, only just come out," hastily replied the driver, who had long since grasped that things were not as they should be.

"It's grand," said Andrei with delight. "But come, I must remember what it was I wanted to tell you, Tanya!"

"It doesn't matter if you can't; don't worry about it. You'll remember later."

"No, dear, I must remember it now; it's important. Oh damn, and I was repeating it to myself all the way along!"

Then he was silent and said not another word till we got home. His face grew pale and his eyes heavy. He got out of the car with difficulty. We supported him, helped him up the stairs, and put him to bed. Malyshev went to fetch a doctor.

Only that night, when he came to, did Andrei "remember" what he had been thinking about, as he had put it, all the way home.

"I've infected myself with recurrent typhus," he said. "Don't worry, after two or three attacks everything will be all right."

He had been to Central Asia on a malaria job, and when he encountered a few unusual cases among the frontier-guards he suspected that it was tick-borne recurrent typhus, which is often confused with malaria. This was, however, evidently some special form of recurrent typhus.

He could have put his guess to the test by infecting white mice with the blood of a patient, but he couldn't obtain any white mice at the frontier post, and in any case he couldn't be certain that they were susceptible to this disease. There was only one thing to do: to infect himself and thus to bring the "special form" of the disease away in his own body. Andrei assured me that this was the only way.

The incubation period of recurrent typhus lasts nearly ten days and nights, and Andrei, who had some business to attend to in Tashkent, had calculated that the first attack would begin the day after he returned home. He was a little out, however; his temperature rose while he was still on the way, thirty-six hours before he reached Moscow.

Recurrent typhus proceeds acutely, with sudden attacks, shivering fits, agonizing headaches. Andrei always reacted badly to a high temperature, and knew that he would be seriously ill. He suffered not two or three but seven attacks in fact, and every time he lost consciousness and became delirious. He implored me not to go away, though I was sitting beside him day and night, complained that the doctors weren't allowing him to observe the course of his illness, and demanded that a large-scale military unit, with all kinds of up-to-date equipment at its disposal, be sent to Central Asia at once to fight against the desert rat.

He was in bed all through August. Then, convinced that he had been right, thinner, with a drawn face and his nose sticking out like Buratino's, he set off again very gaily to Central Asia, to the same frontier post, to fight against tick-borne recurrent typhus and show the local doctors that this disease must not be confused with malaria.

## MORE ABOUT MOULD

It happened when Andrei was still working on the Metro. It was doubtless because he was very much interested in construction matters, in many if not all their aspects, that he went to this meeting, which had nothing to do with medical and sanitary work. The question at issue was a purely technical one, as to which insulating materials were most resistant to mould, which, of course, develops freely underground.

Evidently Andrei thought that everything that related to mould interested me, for rising to speak at the meeting, he said that he knew of a biochemical laboratory which was working on similar questions. This was a bold statement, if only because until then we had been concerned with living tissue and not with dead insulating material. But since he was asked, "Can this laboratory solve the problem?" he had replied, "I think it can," we agreed, of course, and bitumens appeared in our lab—tar-like substances used for insulation against subsoil waters.

I must admit that I don't remember this work very clearly, especially because it was carried out mainly by Victor and Kolomnin. But on the other hand I remember very well that it was this particular work that turned my attention to mould again—to mould which, as before, I thought of as some sort of enchanted store of riches, like Ali Baba's cavern in the *Tales of a Thousand and One Nights.*

* * *

Three years had passed since the time when, having lost my way among the facts which pointed to some mysterious influence of mould upon luminous vibrios, I had given up that work and turned to lysozyme. I had realized long ago that the mere effect of luminosity had, so to speak, blinded me, even at the time when I was on the State Farm and, trembling with cold, got up in the night to look at the ghostly-bluish radiance in the test-tubes. The problem of luminosity had distracted me from the essential problem, which was whether the influence of mould could be used to combat disease-creating microbes. That, after all, was how Pavel Petrovich, who affirmed that mould had medicinal properties, had put the question.

It might appear that what was needed was something quite simple: to subject the agents of all infectious diseases in turn to the action of mould. But the simplicity of this is only apparent. There are in nature hundreds of different forms of mould: fibrous, flaky, dust-like; grey, white, yellow, reddish or (especially often) green in colour. Which of these forms was I to use for the new experiment? I had already evaluated the difference between them, and ascertained that a culture of one fungus would intensify, while a culture of another would decrease the luminosity of the vibrios.

As a start, we tried to combine fungi which dim luminosity (consequently reducing life-activity) with real cholera vibrios. Then we combined them with tubercle bacilli. Then we worked at random, testing the influence of mould on the agents of a great variety of diseases. At length, having convinced ourselves that mould arrests the growth of a number of streptococci, we included the problem of mould in our plan for the next year.

* * *

That evening I returned home early. Pavlik was not yet asleep. He was sitting up in bed, his legs crossed, and very seriously telling Agnia Petrovna about Big-Face Misha who, it appeared, had two fathers. That morning, as she walked with Pavlik along the Leningrad Highway, Granny had established the fact for certain.

"Granny, did you have a daddy?"

"Yes, child."

"One?"

Agnia Petrovna didn't answer for a long time, she must have been thinking, and Pavlik, after repeating his question ten times, decided to change the subject.

"Granny, when one person is eating ice-cream, why does another person always want it?"

I heard this conversation from the next room and went in when Agnia Petrovna was explaining in a complicated way that the "other" ought not to want the ice-cream, that this bad feeling was called envy, and so forth.

Andrei phoned to say that he would be home soon and Agnia Petrovna went to prepare supper. It was time for Pavlik to go to sleep, but he begged me so piteously, "We'll talk a little while, won't we?" and I wanted to so much, that I was led into deceit. I put out the top light and closed the door so that Grandma shouldn't know that we were sitting in the half-dark and talking.

"Tell me a story, Mummy. Will you tell me a story?"

"Yes, a story. But we'll get into trouble with Granny."

"No, we shan't," said Pavlik in a whisper. "She won't hear."

He put his arms round my neck.

"Well, all right. But only on one condition. I'll tell you a story and then you must go to sleep. Once upon a time there was an old doctor. He looked very frightening—hunchbacked and with a beard; but really there was nobody kinder in the whole world. And he had a daughter called Masha. . . ."

The story was nearly finished when the door was opened a little and Agnia Petrovna said in a whisper:

"Tanechka, the telephone."

"Is it Andrei?"

"No."

It was Kramov.

"Tatyana Petrovna, I'm going through your plan and I must say I can't find my way amongst all the question marks."

"What question marks?"

"In the margins."

"I haven't put any question marks in the margins."

"No, *you* haven't. I, however, have put some here and there. Could you come round to see me?"

"When?"

"Right away. I'll expect you."

Not long before I should have been heartily astonished at receiving this polite invitation. At the New Year's Eve party at the Scientists' Club, however, Kramov had openly introduced Glafira Sergeyevna as his wife and she had told everyone in turn, including me, that although until then Valentin Sergeyevich had led a secluded life on his own, now she intended to transform his home into a quite different place, an "open" house where friends would often gather.

It was understood by various hints that the present Glafira Sergeyevna had nothing in common with the past one, and that such an estimable couple as Tatyana Petrovna and Andrei Dmitrich would always be welcome visitors to her respectable home. She would probably have been dumbfounded had she heard the expressive words which Andrei Dmitrich used in commenting on this invitation of hers. Anyhow, it was obvious I had got to go now: the director of the Institute was summoning the head of one of his laboratories, and it didn't matter who his wife was, that had nothing to do with the case!

* * *

"Is it you, Tatyana Petrovna?"

We went into the hall and with exaggerated politeness Valentin Sergeyevich helped me to take off my coat and then invited me into his study.

Before our talk began I looked around me with interest. I had heard that Kramov had assembled a collection of old medical books and prints, and that he had had his furniture bought for him in Leningrad by some connoisseur; in short, that he was rich, however strange this half-forgotten word might sound to us now. His study really was richly furnished, with a large red carpet on the floor and pictures in heavy frames on the walls. In the fire-place stood a green malachite vase. The furniture was dark, but what its period or style was I don't know: the chairs had high, narrow backs and the arm-chairs were deep and massive. Everything was firm, solid, made to last; and amongst these durable, heavy objects a well-dressed little man with a clever, pale face and cautious eyes tripped about on tiptoe.

I asked if I might see his collection, and Kramov at once livened up and blossomed out.

"Why, you could give me no greater pleasure!"

Through the glass front of an oaken bookcase the backs of books were visible. Opening the door of the bookcase he said gaily, "At random!" and pulled out a thick volume in a rusty leather binding. But he had obviously not chosen quite at random, for what I saw was Leeuwenhoek's letters, in Latin, published at Leyden at the end of the seventeenth century.

"Oh!"

"And what about this?"

And carefully he drew from the bookcase a book bound in thick boards reinforced with bronze clasps.

"Paracelsus," said Kramov proudly. "The scientist who in the fifteenth century married chemistry to medicine. And what do you think of this one?"

*"An Account of the Constitution of the Human Body, Briefly Containing the Whole of Anatomy,"* I read with dif-

ficulty the title of the ancient manuscript which he unrolled before me. "So you collect manuscripts, too?"

"Yes, and prints as well."

Glafira Sergeyevna entered bringing tea, biscuits, and sweets, while we were looking at the prints. We exchanged greetings. Hastily, as though she were afraid that Kramov wouldn't let her speak, Glafira Sergeyevna asked me how Andrei was and where we were thinking of spending our holiday. Kramov put in a few words and she looked at him with a somehow uncertain expression. Then, as he impatiently raised his eyebrows, she disappeared at once: big, beautiful, wearing a dress too smart for home wear and carrying the empty tray.

"Well, now!" I thought, intrigued.

Valentin Sergeyevich spent a good hour showing me rare books and "curiosa," as he called the manuscripts of various eccentrics who had tried to bring about a revolution in practical medicine with the aid of cooking salt or brandy from bees. At last I mentioned the plan.

"I must say that I studied your plan with very great enjoyment. It's like going into a good house; it's all well thought-out, firm and solid. The windows, the ceilings, the doors are all in their proper places. But don't you think, my dear Tatyana Petrovna, that your house stands a little bit off the road? This is something that doesn't only strike one in the plan, either, but also in the most recent work done by your laboratory. It is very interesting work," he hastened to add, "especially the study of bile, but.... 'We are concerned with questions to which nobody else besides ourselves is devoting any attention': that is what rings out from every page."

The article on bile had been written by Lena, and when she was correcting the proofs she had asked my advice as to whether she should mention Kramov's theory of immunity. We decided not to mention it, especially as this theory had not the slightest bearing on the subject. Was it perhaps this that Valentin Sergeyevich had in mind?

"Why nobody but ourselves? What about Bogorodsky at the Regional Institute?"

Kramov smiled.

"The Regional Institute is quite a different affair, Tatyana Petrovna. What don't they spend their time on at that worthy establishment! At our Institute, however, we ought (though of course we are still very far from this) to concentrate our efforts on problems of immunology."

"What part of our plan do you think wants changing?"

"Changing? Nothing at all. But if you could manage to link up your work with the distinctive direction which marks our Institute, that would be splendid."

The "distinctive direction" meant nothing other than Kramov's theory of immunity, and it would indeed have been possible, even though it might mean stretching things a little, to link up our work with this theory.

However, the theory itself, although so much had been said and written about it, was not wholly clear to me. To be more precise, it had become not wholly clear to me ever since I had become more closely acquainted with it.

"Don't you think that when you put a problem before a member of your staff it should be a little narrower than the one he ought to be solving? It's good for him, because in this way he will think that he is capable of doing more than has fallen to his lot. And it is good for you, because it compels him to run after you and not you after him. Don't be angry with me for giving you this little piece of advice. I'm just passing on my experience."

This exhortation of his sounded in some way very distant, cold, and alien. I did not reply.

"And don't you think that Merzlyakov has undertaken a problem which is physiological rather than microbiological?" he asked, continuing to go through my plan. "The influence of sleep on the inflammatory reaction. Why, indeed, need this question be dealt with at all in our Institute? If I were in your place, I'd give him something else to do."

"Such as?"

"I don't know. I'd have to think. But, Tatyana Petrovna, why don't you take up, say...."

And he named a few subjects which he considered very important in connection with the problem of the non-susceptibility of the organism to infectious diseases.

He strutted about the study with his little fists clenched firmly behind his back, and genuine passion (or was I mistaken?) sounded in his voice as he tried to persuade me that all the laboratories of our Institute ought to combine their efforts in order to create a universal theory of immunity.

Then, recollecting himself, he asked, "Perhaps you'd care for some more tea?"

I refused with thanks.

"Still, it's good that we don't quarrel any more. You see, I must confess that I didn't understand you at once, Tatyana Petrovna. You're a person who develops slowly.... Slowly but persistently. And your persistence is good and intelligent. Yet, even so, I say frankly that I still don't quite understand you. For instance, how did this green mould come to be in your plan? Once upon a time you busied yourself with the influence of mould on luminous vibrios; unsuccessfully, if I'm not mistaken. And at that time it made me think, if you'll pardon my saying this, of the backyards of science. For it is backyards," he added softly, "that usually smell of mould and are littered with rubbish."

This was unjustified, if only because mould was included among the non-obligatory subjects in my plan. But, more than that, it was offensive.

"I don't know what you are getting at with this criticism, Valentin Sergeyevich. It has always seemed to me that science has not and cannot have either backyards or front doors. In Leeuwenhoek's time they probably regarded the grinding of lenses as belonging to a backyard of science. As for mould...."

He stopped me with a smile.

"You know, Tatyana Petrovna, in Australia they have a sort of curved stick which returns to the person who throws it. A boomerang, they call it. What makes you keep coming back to this question, with the consistency of a boomerang? I vaguely recall that somebody else has already made the attempt to discover bactericidal properties in mould."

"Who was that? Was it published?"

Kramov pondered.

"Wait a moment.... Where did I read about it? No, I can't remember.... But, Tatyana Petrovna, you can't be serious about this."

"Valentin Sergeyevich, we haven't been working long on this subject, but we've already succeeded in showing that mould fungus decreases the growth of certain streptococci."

"Really? And you claim," Kramov asked, smiling, "that your work is based on the study of the protective forces of the organism? I ask you, what relation has your green mould to the mechanism of this self-protection?"

This question had already occurred to me when I was in my fourth year at the Institute and, while engaged on my first piece of scientific work, was re-reading Pavel Petrovich's lectures. Even then I had vaguely supposed that mould, for all its healing properties, which the old doctor so loved to talk about, was in no way connected with his "beneficent protective forces." Now Kramov had again raised this question for me, and raised it in a distinct and definite form. In fact, even if I had some grounds for refuting his first argument, that mould has no bactericidal properties, how could I rebut the second? Kramov had pointed accurately to the weakest spot in our plan, and I was obliged, though this was very disagreeable, to acknowledge that I was wrong. I had long suspected that all our failures with mould arose from the lack of any theoretical basis for this work. But did this mean that we should abandon it, as Kramov was demanding? Why not assume that we would find the theoretical basis of the problem along with its correct solution?

I could not find an answer, and after a delicate silence, Kramov spoke to me about the trip to Rostov. There was to be a conference in Rostov in the spring at which our Institute was to present its new research.

"All our hopes rest on your lysozyme," he said jokingly, but with a hint that this joke had its serious side, which I should think over. "We were considering the agenda at the organizing committee yesterday. Your paper has been assigned to the first day. Any objections?"

* * *

It was with a nasty feeling that some sort of dirty work was going on that I left Kramov; and all the way home I was busy convincing myself that the new subjects inserted in our plan were very important and interesting.

## IN ROSTOV

It was one of those conferences at which it becomes clear that facts newly discovered by scientific research do not fit into theoretical patterns which only the day before were considered indisputable, axiomatic. The facts in this case related to the nature of bacteriophage. It was clear already by the third day that everyone was interested in just this question, which was immeasurably deeper in importance than the others before the conference, however important these had seemed the day before.

What was bacteriophage, this "devourer" of bacteria? It was secreted by the agents of dysentery, cholera, and other diseases, and proved to be a powerful curative and prophylactic means. But what was its nature, was it alive or dead, an "organism" or a "substance"? The further study of phage was bound up with the solution of this question. If phage was an "organism" then it must be studied by biological methods, if a "substance" then by physico-chemical methods.

Only physico-chemical theory could explain the true nature of phage, was Kramov's argument. Phage was a substance; in it were distinctly apparent all the features of the dead, inorganic world. It was nothing but a "play of molecules." Not biology, but physics and chemistry were destined to determine the characteristic features of this process.

That day I was sitting next to Kolomnin, and as we listened to Kramov he said to me that he thought that it was time to take up theory seriously, not at meetings but in the laboratory.

"And it's very good that you've agreed to include those new subjects in our plan, Tatyana Petrovna."

"You think so?"

"At the worst, we'll lose six months."

"That's quite a lot. . . ."

"I call on Professor Lapshin," said the chairman.

This was one of Valentin Sergeyevich's Rostov pupils. He concluded his paper with the words, "And so, in our examination of the complex problem of the nature of phage, we witness the indisputable triumph of the Kramov tendency."

Triumph: it was too soon to say that. It would have been more exact to say: progress. This indisputable progress became defined on about the third day of our work, when everything that happened at the conference underwent a sort of spontaneous turn towards the Kramov school. In nearly every communication we heard the names of Krupensky, Belskaya, or Melkova. Everything became "Kramovite," not excluding my paper on lysozyme, which had not the slightest relation to Valentin Sergeyevich's theory.

There were two instances, however, during the conference, when the suspicion arose in me that this progress bore an organizational rather than a scientific character. The first came when, after Valentin Sergeyevich's own paper, to my surprise some kind of indistinct conflict within the school itself broke out. Only muffled echoes of this conflict reached me, but even from these it was easy to understand that, in essence, the conflict was about this or that degree of closeness to the "chief." People who the day before had been united by a common aim had begun to look at each other with unfriendly, envious eyes.

But danger appeared ahead, and that was the second instance. All personal considerations, malice, envy, efforts to oust each other were swept aside. A mutual guarantee which was at once somehow secret and deeply concealed and yet business-like, had united these people in a trice.

That was how it was when Grandad rose to address the conference.

Everybody knew that Nikolsky, despite his seventy-eight years, "worked with his hands," delegating to nobody the manual, experimental part of the work on phage which he had conceived on a wide scale. They knew also that this work of his was based on recognition of the nature of phage as a dead thing. But now, in his paper devoted to this question, Grandad abandoned his former position and took up another, cancelling completely his previous work on the subject, which was regarded as classical. This new position, from which he deduced far-reaching conclusions, consisted in acknowledging that phage was not dead but alive.

There was something extraordinarily touching in the very simplicity with which he made this acknowledgement. Pondering after every word, as though estimating whether it might still be far from the truth, this old man, who had been Mechnikov's companion-in-arms and Pasteur's assistant, courageously renounced, in the presence of his pupils and followers, friends and foes, something he considered scientifically false, and advanced along a new, unexplored path.

Valentin Sergeyevich's supporters, however, made a different estimate of Grandad's address.

"Does the old man mean to last another three-quarters of a century?" I heard one of Kramov's Rostov confederates ask with vexation of another from Kazan.

"There have been a number of inaccuracies in the living history of Russian microbiology," said Lapshin, bitingly.

With bitterness concealed behind cold compliments they all as one man spoke against Nikolsky. Then Grandad had the floor again.

"We have heard many claims today that only Professor Kramov's doctrine can explain the true nature of phage," he said, with the pleased expression which always came over his face when he was going to become involved in a fight. "It is a very complex question, not completely settled; and I, together with many other research workers, cannot yet support my conviction with conclusive, indisputable facts. But is it possible to approach, let alone to settle this question, if one raises round oneself a fence of ready-made ideas, and never even tries to look over the top of this artificially-constructed fence?" He showed the height of the fence with his long arm. "What have you achieved in practice during these last few years? The practical side of immunology has saved millions of lives, that is common knowledge. We need only recall that until inoculation against smallpox was discovered, hundreds of thousands of people died of this disease every year, and that before anti-diphtheritic serum was discovered, out of every hundred children who caught diphtheria forty perished. And what is happening now in those fields where we have not yet made progress? People are dying there," he said fiercely. "How can we not think of that? For what we are talking about is phage, which can forestall and check the terrible march of an epidemic!"

* * *

I was awaiting with emotion the moment when I would meet Mitya. He had written to us, and as I read his letters in which, mocking himself, he described his life in Rostov, I found myself comparing them with Andrei's: the two handwritings were very much alike. But whereas Andrei's letters were always a kind of means to explain to himself and to me what was filling his mind and heart, Mitya, on the contrary, not only did not try to reveal himself but used his witty letters as a sort of shield. But however much he tried to hide, I guessed a thing or two, especially as glimpses of our memorable conversation on the eve of his departure from Moscow showed from time to time among the hurried lines.

I don't remember the name of the street where he lived. I only remember that the windows of his room looked on to a boulevard along which the young people of Rostov used to stroll until late at night. One could hear their voices distinctly and clearly, and what subjects didn't those fresh, pure voices argue about! They discussed the Leningrad "Dynamos," who had substantial hopes of winning the football championship of the U.S.S.R. that year. They debated whether there could be friendship between young men and women: was such a sentiment possible and how did it differ from love? On one occasion they were discussing just that interesting subject on the bench under Mitya's balcony.

Mitya and I were left alone that evening; our people had gone off in the morning to the Rostov Agricultural Machinery Works and had phoned to say that from the factory they were going on somewhere else. It was quiet. The moon had risen over the city, large, red and, as Mitya said, "magnetic." It really was difficult, somehow, to stop gazing at it. Lamps lit up the splendid lime-trees along the boulevard delicately and clearly.

"Wasn't there something you wanted to ask me about, Tanya?"

"A lot of things."

"Well, ask away. But first let me ask you: aren't you glad there's no need for you to stamp your foot at me any more?"

"Yes, I'm glad. But I didn't stamp."

"You did stamp," said Mitya, amused. "And you shouted. And you were sure it helped, weren't you?"

"No, I wasn't sure. But did it help?"

"Not very much."

Mitya was silent. A few days before, when he had met us at the station, I had been pleased to find that he had scarcely changed during the year. But now, as we sat in the twilight, something eagle-like and sombre showed in his lean face with its high-raised eyebrows.

"Not very much," he repeated sadly. "You wouldn't believe, Tanya, how much effort of spirit I have to spend to forget her. I try to remember your arguments, and find thousands of objections to them which to you and Andrei would probably seem merely funny. Every morning I set myself the task of not thinking of her. I tore up the only photograph I brought with me from Moscow, and then spent a whole night putting the bits together with glue. There, look at it."

It must have been taken long before, perhaps ten years before. A charming, thoughtful face, delicately oval, with a subtly outlined, slightly pouting mouth, looked at me from the portrait. In the twilight it was hard to realize that the picture had been torn up and then the pieces glued together.

"This is how it is, my dear.... Here in Rostov I've met.... I've got to know a woman and I've realized.... She's a very good woman, intelligent and simple...."

Mitya was silent again. He was very moved.

"And what then?"

"Oh, nothing. You see, she's very nice. Lovely."

"Is she a doctor?"

"How did you guess?" Mitya asked with interest. "Yes, she's a surgeon. A pupil of B.'s." And he named a well-known Rostov specialist, who had been to the Grain State Farm to examine Repnin. "I told her that Glafira Sergeyevna had always been demanding that I stop being myself. And she asked me, 'Did she want that for her own sake or for yours?'"

"And what did you say?"

"Well, how would you have answered that question, Tanya?"

"For her own sake, of course. When you consider that she wanted to make you into a careerist instead of a scientist. Oh, Mitya! You see, Glafira Sergeyevna was in essence a simple person. She hoped you would devote all the powers of your mind and heart to the cause which to her seemed the most important of all—the building up of a comfortable, easy, showy life. But you buried yourself in the study of the virus theory of the origin of cancer, a very obscure question with not the remotest relation to an easy life. And all this became obvious when she. . . ."

Then I stopped speaking.

"Go on, Tanya."

"When, by marrying Valentin Sergeyevich, she got the chance to show visitors an album full of press cuttings in every one of which Kramov's name was mentioned."

Mitya sat straight-backed, his shoulders squared, staring motionless at the line of lamps which curved round a bend and ran off along the boulevard into the darkness.

And yet I vaguely felt that he was recovering from his severe "illness." He scarcely spoke about his life in Rostov, and even seemed to get angry when I began persistently asking him whether he'd managed to adjust himself to work at the Medical Institute. But this was just what was new in Mitya, who had always been fond of boasting a little about his doings.

Actually, he was getting on splendidly in his department. While in Rostov I met Dr. Rovinsky, that melancholy epidemiologist who had once upon a time summed up the lessons of the imaginary cholera epidemic at the State Farm. When I asked him about Mitya he replied, shrugging his shoulders vaguely, that in the course of the year Mitya had become one of the popular professors at the Medical Institute.

"What made you let him leave Moscow? Are the streets littered with professors like him up there?"

I expected that Mitya would speak against Valentin Sergeyevich. He had some serious objections to the Kramov theory, based on experimental work. But he took no part even in the discussions. He was afraid that personal relations might show through in his speech in spite of himself, and then they'd accuse him of prejudice and insincerity: an idea which wouldn't have held back Rubakin or Andrei or even Kolomnin, who was, so to speak, a typical hereditary intellectual.

On the eve of our departure, Kolomnin, Mitya, and I went to a sports fête on the Don. The day was sunny and bright. We took a boat with two pairs of oars. Mitya said, "Believe me, I haven't handled oars for ten years," and the oarsmen got down to their work so harmoniously that in a moment the boat had crossed into the middle of the river and almost collided with some bathers, who at once swam off towards the shore. The bathers were pretty girls and Kolomnin declared that in Rostov one encountered beautiful women at every step. The girls heard him, laughed and argued among themselves, "Oh, Ninka, don't give yourself airs, he doesn't mean you!" And their laughter reached us for a long time as we floated along, together with their voices, which rang out as voices always do on a river.

The brightly-decorated shore, with its masts carrying many-coloured flags, slowly drew near to us—slowly, because it was pleasant on the water and I asked my boatmen not to hurry specially. And it was there and just at that moment, worlds away from conferences and disputes about the nature of phage, indeed from everything with which the last few days had been filled, that Mitya suddenly shipped his oars and said:

"You know, Grandad was right."

"What grandad are you talking about?" I asked.

"What other one is there? Nikolsky."

Bodies glittering in the sun, with water streaming off them, appeared on the steps leading from the water to the bank. We were not far from the finish of a swimming race. The noisy crowd of people, wearing their best clothes, who were moving along the embankment met some of the winners with loud shouts of approval and others with silence.

"He's right in declaring that phage is a living thing. True, the decisive facts aren't available yet, but. . . ."

"Anybody would imagine you had them!"

"That's just it," replied Mitya quietly.

The boat station was quite close now. But where were we to pull in? This required thought. The boats stood close together, one against another, with new ones coming up from right and left every minute.

"Don't boast, Mitya, you haven't got anything."

"Yes, I have, Tanya."

It was not possible to continue this conversation for the simple reason that Kolomnin, whose face had suddenly become very serious, also abandoned his oars, and our boat bumped into another one, which was packed full of some unfriendly, overdressed people wearing bright-coloured ties and broad-brimmed hats.

Nowadays, when the most recent research workers have approached very close to deciding the nature of phage, nobody would be particularly surprised at what Mitya told us and what he showed us next day in his lab. In the autumn of 1936, however, this statement of his seemed so improbable to both Kolomnin and me that, without discussing it, we both came to the same conclusion, which seemed to us the most likely explanation: a dirty experiment. That is what they call an experiment in which control is carried out with insufficient precision. Mitya didn't insist, which, incidentally, was again amazingly unlike him.

## WITH OLD FRIENDS

All these years I had been following the life of State Grain Farm No. 5, and not only from the newspapers, either. My old friends hadn't forgotten me and they wrote me letters, though not very often. I knew that a branch of the railway had been built out to the farm, that they were now getting twelve to thirteen and a half hundredweight of grain per acre, that the lime-trees along Commune Avenue had grown up and become, as Borodulin wrote, "typical, normal lime-trees." I had long been homesick for the State Farm, where I'd spent such laborious but pleasant years.

I knew that soon after my departure Repnin had become very depressed and then suddenly disappeared.... Where had he gone? They had investigated this problem from every angle on the State Farm. Why, before he disappeared, had he so often been to the District Public Health Office at Salsk? Why, without any visible cause, had he interested himself in problems of the medical service, so remote from his basic work? Why, whenever he met his friends, had he bitterly denounced the lack of good feldshers in the State Farm? Without them, he declared, it was impossible to bring the medical service to the level required. All had been explained when Repnin returned bringing a young wife, one M. Speshneva, who began working as a feldsher at the State Farm's medical centre.

Soon I received a letter from that very same M. Speshneva. "It's not only because I'm writing to you, dear Tanya," the letter began, "that I want to tell you about the greatest change that can ever have happened in my life. It's also because Danila Stepanich wants you, just as I do, to be the first to know about it. You were the only person he told about what he felt, and only you know how, if I had never met him, I would never have found the way to personal happiness."

Danila Stepanich added that Mashenka wanted us to attend the wedding, saying that it wouldn't amount to much without us, and begged us very earnestly to come and see them. Andrei, suddenly warming to the idea, decided that we should without fail spend our next leave at the State Farm. But we didn't take our next leave, and the one after that I spent in the Crimea. When it was announced that the conference on phage would be held in Rostov, however, I wrote to the Repnins, and received in reply a very long telegram, with a supplement which gave in detail a new route from Rostov to the Gigant and from there by the new branch line to State Grain Farm No. 5. In it they expressed the firm conviction that no power on earth could stop me from keeping my promise this time....

On the branch line to the State Farm I found myself travelling in the same compartment with a young woman, and for a long time I didn't understand why she was looking at me so attentively.

"Don't you remember me, doctor? I'm Klava Borisova. I injured my hand. You treated me."

This was not the first time that a patient whom I couldn't remember had recognized me, and there was nothing I could do but to admit it frankly. But a sultry July day suddenly came back to my mind—a dusty farm-section in the desert, the sides of tents bellying in the hot wind, and in one of these tents a girl asleep, her hand clumsily bandaged. A pile of books in a home-made box beside a faded blotter, a dictionary of foreign words lying on the ground.

"Of course I remember you! Why, later on you came to my ward. Now I'm on my way to the State Farm, to see the Repnins. Do you know them?"

"Danila Stepanich? Who doesn't know him? And Masha."

"Are you still with the State Farm?"

"Yes. But I went to Rostov to study and this spring I finished my course at the technical college and came back."

"Didn't you work on a combine?"

"Yes."

"And now?"

"Now I'm assistant mechanic of the combine park. You'll come and see us at the park, won't you?"

An impassive, yellowish face came to my mind, the face of a man who never raised his voice. Maslov! He was assistant mechanic of the combine park when I went to the State Farm in 1929.

"The work is organized on completely different lines now, not in sections but in departments, and each department has a shop, a bath-house, and a chemist's. We used to have no stock-breeding at all, but now we have a huge livestock department and the whole way the place is run has been changed."

"And is Pavel Ivanich still there as director?"

"Muravyov? No, he left a long time ago. He was a good man, but much too irresolute and timid. They sent him away to study. Our director is Fyodor Platonich Redkin. What a man!"

And such an expression of respect mingled with caution came over Klava's face that it was not hard to guess that Fyodor Platonich was a man to be taken seriously.

"And is Chilimov still working there?"

"No, he's studying, too. He was Secretary of the Party Committee in your day, I think?"

"And Borodulin?"

"The mechanic?"

"Yes."

"Well, now, Borodulin," said Klava with profound respect; "he, one can say, is the pride of our farm."

"Really?"

"Yes, indeed. They've even written about him in *Pravda*."

We went on talking until a fine yellow building with columns began to drift into view outside our compartment window.

"It's State Grain Farm No. 5 Railway Station," Klava told me, pleased that I looked so surprised.

* * *

The Repnins lived on the extreme outskirts of Central Hamlet, on the very spot where, to the best of my recollection, Dr. Drozdov, the head of the Salsk District Public Health Office, had once set up his isolation hospital. Now, standing back on either side of the road, small houses occupied this spot; they were single-storeyed, had white iron roofs shining in the sun, and in one of them lived Danila Stepanich and Masha. As we drew near the front garden, where tall hemp-plants were swaying proudly, Klava (who was showing me the way) and I saw not the master or the mistress, but a thin, elderly woman with short curly hair and a wrinkled kindly face. This was Masha's mother.

"Mavra Petrovna, a visitor for you!"

"Oh, good heavens, you've arrived! And the children aren't at home. Please come in! I told Danila Stepanich you'd arrive today."

Klava took leave of me, promising to look in later, and we went into a spacious hallway, then into a room which was not merely clean but super-clean, with a shining floor that you were afraid to walk on, and table-cloths, cushion-covers and runners lying absolutely everywhere that table-cloths, cushion-covers or runners could be laid, and a parrot in a cage which, when it saw us, shrieked, "Not at all, Your Honour!" thereby revealing that its conscious life had begun in pre-revolutionary times.

Mavra Petrovna urged me to take a rest after my journey, but the journey hadn't been hard, I wasn't tired and, after reassuring the old woman, who wanted to go with me, I set off to the medical centre to see Masha.

* * *

What Klava had mentioned in passing during our conversation in the train, when she said, "Now we have departments," must have meant a thorough reorganization of the farm, for changes connected with this reorganization met me at every step. It was not merely that you could walk down Commune Avenue now without sinking in mud; not merely that, instead of the awnings beneath which we had drunk our apple-cider and read the newspapers, there now stood a stone pavilion behind a stout iron railing; not merely that the waste ground between detached houses had been filled in and that tractors were not wandering at large through the park, which extended over a good two hectares. The main thing was that the technical side had quitted Central Hamlet; evidently it was now concentrated in the departments, leaving the former noisy camp, smelling of petrol, to be transformed into this quiet, white little steppe town, surrounded by gardens.

I convinced myself that this was so by going to the place which used to be the noisiest of all, the place where, night and day, motor engines rattled, snorted and roared and where greasers reigned, dazed by nights without sleep, wearing overalls that gleamed with oil. This had been the machine-and-tractor park. Now it was called the Stadium, because on the right a volleyball pitch could be seen, outlined in white, and on the left small boys were whirling round on giant's strides.

What struck me especially, though, was another change, doubtless because it concerned something close to me and to which in my time I had devoted no little labour. I mean the medical centre.

"The medical centre?" a fair-haired young fellow asked me with surprise, standing at the door of the house which had been the premises of my "surgery." "Do you mean the hospital? As you go down Commune Avenue, the meteorological station is on your right and the hospital is on your left."

In my time, opposite the meteorological station had stood a more or less tumbledown hut which must have served to shelter shepherds on rainy days. Now, as I approached the garden, enclosed by a low fence, I saw three little white houses, joined by a path with bushes growing alongside it. Down this path a girl was walking wearing a kerchief and a white gown and carrying a nickel-plated box—a nurse; and at a distance people dressed in gowns were sitting on a bench—patients.

I gazed with emotion at these little houses, which turned out to be not so little; when I went close up to them I found that each had ten windows. "Maternity Home" I read on one of them, and remembered my conversation with the director when he criticized me for having ordered a "pictorial exhibition on the care of mothers and children" without taking into consideration that the youngest of the

State Farm's inhabitants was not less than sixteen or seventeen years of age. They probably found my exhibition useful now, if they hadn't changed it long since for another and better one.

Patients were sitting beside the office where Masha was working. I settled down on a little sofa in the reception-room and prepared to wait, but I didn't have to wait long. Masha, looking just the same as five years before, except that, perhaps, she was a little paler and thinner, came out of the office and set herself with anxious face to count the patients. It was obvious that she wanted to go home. She was going to count me, too; she stared at me, gave a low cry of "Tanya!" and rushed up to me.

"Why didn't they tell me! Have you been waiting for me long?"

"I've just come. Don't hurry, I can wait. Shall I help you? Do you remember how you helped me?"

"Thanks, no! I'll soon be finished. Have you been to our place?"

"Yes."

"You found Mother there at least? Didn't you rest from your journey?"

"It wasn't much of a journey. Go on, get finished, and meanwhile I'll take a stroll round here. Doesn't my Katya still work at the hospital?"

"She left long ago. She got married and went off to the Far East."

Mashenka didn't realize why I laughed. The two nurses who had worked there before Katya had also both got married and gone off to the Far East.

"Oh well, I'll find somebody I know."

But I didn't find anybody. All the people working in the new hospital were new themselves and it was one of the doctors, himself not long down from the Leningrad Institute, who willingly showed me round.

* * *

"No, no, I'm quite happy," Masha repeated this several times, as though convincing not only me but herself as well.

We were sitting in the little garden which, to judge by the expression with which she spoke of it, was Masha's pride and which she looked after with affection. This little garden was indeed attractive; I especially liked the little climbing roses which somebody had brought Repnin from Sukhumi.

"I was afraid of Danila at first; for one thing, though this may sound funny to you, because he's so big, so tall. At first they gave us a tiny room on the State Farm, seven square yards altogether, and when he came in there didn't seem to be any room left for me. I was always thinking: how shall we manage to live together? And still now I sometimes wake him up at night; not that he snores," Mashenka explained gravely, "but he breathes very noisily and that frightens me."

I laughed. She glanced at me and began to laugh, too.

"You understand, Tanya, we're utterly different people," she went on. "That's why at first I was always trying to find out why he loved me. I've always thought, and I still do, that there must be a reason why one person loves another. Well, he explained the reasons why he loved me and I was horrified because I realized that I was quite different from what he thought me to be. I did my best to persuade him not to marry me, arguing I was bad-tempered. But, you know, there was no managing him," she concluded, blushing slightly.

I told her how Danila Stepanich, when he was nearly at death's door, had been helped by talking about her. Raising her large, trustful eyes to me she listened attentively and seriously.

"Yes, as a woman, I felt at once that he loved me," she said. "Even before I came, he took great care of Mother and it touched me that he'd talked to her quite frankly about everything. But you see... I grew used to him before I learned to love him," Masha explained, as though excusing herself a little to me. "He kept saying that I'd love him in the long run. On the whole, he's very sure of himself and we sometimes quarrel about it. Something in my heart did tell me, not very distinctly, that I loved him. I'm very affectionate, you see, and then...."

"I'm happy it all turned out as it did." I kissed her. "It's wonderful. Danila Stepanich is a good man, open-hearted, strong, and straightforward. Does it really matter if your characters are different? Andrei and I are different, too, but whenever I'm away from him I feel bored and anxious and somehow lost."

While we had walked from the hospital Masha and I had spoken of Andrei quite calmly. But now I felt I shouldn't have mentioned him. Masha was silent, turned away her eyes, and I changed the subject to Pavlik, saying that it was a pity I didn't have his photograph with me.

Danila Stepanich, jovial, noisy, muddy, his face black with dust, burst in, clad in overalls and rubber boots reaching above the knee, when it was already dark and we had moved from the garden into the house.

"Tatyana," he said in a helpless kind of way, and, his arms hanging at his sides, remained standing in the middle of the room looking as though I'd slain him by my mere appearance. "Doctor! Can I believe my eyes?"

He was going to embrace me, but Masha wouldn't let him. She took him out into the passage and called her mother. After that for a good twenty minutes we heard through the door a symphony made up of a great variety of sounds: a flapping as though somebody was beating carpets, a scraping, as though the floor was being swept with a rough mop, a gurgling, a snorting, a pouring, and so on. Then Danila Stepanich, washed, handsome, wearing a new suit, came into the room and said:

"We're fighting against the marsh-lands, Tatyana! We're building a road through Bolshoi Yarlyk!"

* * *

Everybody arrived at once. Shurkhin came; he was now in charge of one of the departments. Klava came with her husband, whom I found I had met before, when he was Secretary of the Komsomol Committee in the autumn of 1930 and we had worked together to organize break-through teams. Nearly all those at the table were former patients of mine. Later my most important patient, Borodulin, turned up. He had evidently remained a living monument to my fruitful activity, to judge by the shouts of "Ah, the luminous man!" from those who had already arrived, the moment his clumsy figure appeared in the doorway.

These people recalled the early days of the building of the State Farm, and their camp-like life in carriages and vans, as though the farm had been founded not seven but at least twenty-five years before. Then the mechanic said that, in his capacity as a sacrifice to science, he would like to know what had been the subsequent fate of those luminous vibrios which had been obtained from his organism for the first time on earth. I had to confess that I had not managed to explain this mysterious phenomenon. But I told them what I had managed to achieve, while the story of the competition at the caviare factory was a great success.

We remained sitting at the table until light began to show through the window and the outlines of Masha's garden appeared faintly. I didn't want to sleep, but still I had to lie down if only for a little while, especially as next day I was to return to Rostov, where, like the other participants in the conference, I had talks still to deliver in the factories.

Danila Stepanich filled the glasses for the last time and stood up.

"Comrades," he said, "we have today met an old friend of ours, and I want to say a word of friendship in farewell to Tatyana Petrovna. Now, I, as you know, am a builder of roads. What about these roads that we've laid so hurriedly through the virgin steppe, and which now we're making permanent, strengthening, reinforcing, and beautifying to the best of our means and abilities? They're the motor roads along which our life is speeding forward. And just now I was thinking to myself that each one of us has his own road. I have one, for instance, and Tatyana Petrovna has another, which has led her far away from our State Farm. But all these paths and tracks of ours lead in the end to one common goal, to the triumph of communism. Let's wish happiness to our dear doctor on the next lap of her hard but glorious road. Let's drink to her health and then, begging your pardon, let's turn in, because Tatyana Petrovna hasn't had any rest yet and tomorrow morning she has to go back to Rostov."

## *Chapter VI*

## IN THE HOUSE OF A STRANGER

### THE NEW PLAN

Nothing seemed to have changed in the life of our laboratory since I came back from my interview with the director, bringing the new plan of work. The practical application of lysozyme had been extended further. Surgeons were treating superficial wounds and burns with it, specialists in infectious diseases were testing it in the treatment of diphtheria and influenza. Kolomnin was keenly at work on chemical substances which gave rise to immunological reactions, this being one of the basic "Kramovite" subjects. Lena and I were also working with interest on new subjects. Our work seemed to be going ahead. Why, then, my feeling of uncertainty, which became more distinct and acute with every week that went by?

In the old days we had known both success and failure. For weeks we had twisted and turned, repeating rarely successful experiments, while by our side a valuable fact lay unobserved, only one thing being needed to notice it: the ability to see. Sometimes we had been held up for a long time and then, like travellers in a strange place, we used these accidental stops to determine our position. Sometimes we had given more importance to a newly discovered fact than it deserved; Andrei used to criticize me for this, and he was nearly always right.

But we had gone ahead, despite all these errors and failures.

Now we had no errors, no failures. The laboratory was better equipped than before, with as many experimental animals as we wanted and the technical staff nearly doubled. Nobody was going to transfer us to the Fisheries Trust, nobody reproached us for our "industrial tendency." At Institute conferences we were spoken of as "one of the leading laboratories." And yet over two years not a single piece of work of any value came out of this "leading laboratory." Only Victor, who kept working away at his thesis ("more physiological than microbiological") seemed to be close to success.

* * *

The mould problem was not mentioned in our plan, but I continued to work on it in my spare time. I looked through Pavel Petrovich's lecture notes (for the nth time!), I hunted after published work, I discovered (so far as I was concerned, of course) that Russian research workers had done a great deal of work on mould; so far back as 1877 the physician P. G. Lebedinsky had defended a thesis in the Petersburg Medico-Surgical Academy entitled: *Materials Relating to the Problem of the Curative Significance of Green Mould for Animal Organisms.* Experiments on animals; that was the interesting feature of Lebedinsky's research. For the first time he had shown that mould fungus suppresses bacteria in a living organism. I repeated in our laboratory the most interesting of these old researches and I thought endlessly about them; more than I was supposed to think about this rejected subject.

As before, our Institute was looked upon as one of the centres of medical theory, and Dogadov and Belskaya demonstrated this with iron staunchness at all meetings, conferences and gatherings. This was also done with competence, brilliance and variety of method by Krupensky, who had become *de facto* head of the Institute.

A number of workers at the Institute, including Rubakin and myself, were awarded the title of Doctor of Medical Science on the strength of our work, without having to defend theses. Valentin Sergeyevich came to see us rather rarely; he had planned out his own, private path in life, and you could see that he had in fact made use of the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes merely as a springboard. He held one of the leading positions in the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine, a huge, recently-created organization which combined dozens of scientific establishments. Medical journals rarely printed articles on immunological subjects without consulting him and getting his approval. Now and again he gave the impression of having ceased to interest himself not only in our laboratories but in his own as well. This impression was incorrect, however. As before, he looked upon the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes as his theoretical base, and from this particular standpoint he made himself acquainted—only occasionally, but then with close attention—with the results of our work. This was precisely why Krupensky and Dogadov uttered their sounding phrases to the effect that but for our Institute's devotion to high theory, Soviet medical thought would develop far less vigorously and successfully.

In point of fact, however, only one man was studying theory in real earnest, and that was Rubakin, who was examining the Kramov theory itself. As of old, he spent as much time in other people's laboratories as in his own, but now underlying all his thinking and all his ready advice and all his sharp irony was a single idea: Is Kramov right? What does his theory mean? What conclusions can practical medicine draw from it?

Pencil in hand, he read every line published by Valentin Sergeyevich, beginning with his first pamphlet, issued in 1910. *Studies in Infection* he did not simply read, but studied in all its editions, with all the corrections and additions. He carried out in his laboratory a check on all Kramov's fundamental research work, doing it with great care; he had evidently decided that neither effort nor time should be grudged for this work.

He was particularly interested in what went on in Dogadov's and Belskaya's laboratories.

Whatever new facts they observed in these laboratories were easily explained by Kramov's teaching on immunity. "It was bound to work out like that" was their comment on the results of any research they did, regardless of whether it was appropriate or not. And Rubakin one day at the Academic Council, after hearing the first ten lines of Dogadov's routine communication, foretold what the conclusion would be, to the profound consternation of that lean, highly educated person, packed full of quotations from Bordet and Nicolle.

"Do you want to know how I did it?" he asked, his previous good-natured manner gone, as he wound a lock of his long hair round his finger. "Very simply. In all circumstances the result arrived at must confirm your theory. And that duly occurred."

Something had changed in Pyotr Nikolayevich in the last few years. His former easy-going nature, which went with his outward appearance of easy-goingness, had disappeared; and this outward appearance had changed, too, especially his eyes, which now had a stern expression.

As time passed I grew convinced that some people at the Institute were afraid of him. Then I began to be afraid of him myself. Lena and I, however, grew closer to each other with the passing of the years. It wouldn't be true to say that we never quarrelled; mutual criticism sometimes even led to a noticeable coolness between us. But, criticism aside, we could not live without each other: that had been established long ago and required no proof.

* * *

The Rubakins were still living in Crimea Square, in a room which was as unlike Mitya's old room as its new inhabitants were unlike the old. Lena was a little crazy about cleanliness; she always looked apologetic when I caught her "licking" (I can't think of a different word) every single corner. The room was white and looked lived-in, with a bed which in the day-time was transformed into a sofa (design by P. N. Rubakin), and with convenient shelves (author of plan, as above), and it shone with orderliness and cleanliness.

Should some economist take it into his head to study the question of the material standard of living of scientific personnel of the middle grade in the Soviet Union, the Rubakin family would greatly complicate his task. There is a children's game called "Snakes and Ladders," in which the players throw dice and then move counters up a board until they hit an obstacle, when the counters have to go back to the bottom again. It was in this zigzag way that the Rubakins' "standard of living" proceeded. There was an upward tendency only in the first few days after receipt of salary, a wonderful time when the mistress of the house, with her love of quick decisions, invited friends round every evening. Then the standard dropped sharply and a period of distinct impoverishment set in. Then suddenly debts both large and small would be repaid in the course of an hour and yesterday's poverty-stricken couple would take a taxi and go off to see something exciting, like the recently opened Moscow Restaurant. In brief, it was not worth asking Lena where their money went: she would only gaze into the distance in an embarrassed way and, nonchalantly waving her hand, change the subject to something "more interesting."

Pyotr Nikolayevich did not interfere with her ways; not because he did not value the creature comforts connected with a normal financial standard of living (on the contrary, he had lived so long without money in his youth that he had learnt to value it), but because he loved his wife, and everything she did seemed to him not only right but excellent.

Lena never missed a football match, and her husband, with a gentle smile, tried conscientiously to grasp the essential differences between the offensive tactics of the "Central Club of the Red Army" team and those of the "Dynamos." If no match was on they would go to the Central Recreation Park, or simply anywhere where there were a lot of people. But there were also some wonderful days when Lena would appear, unexpectedly and unforeseeably, at our flat at ten o'clock in the morning and tell us, not without embarrassment, that "Petka" had pushed her out because he had to work.

There was one sorrow in that generally happy menage which didn't pass away with the years but, on the contrary, became deeper. The Rubakins had no children, though both of them didn't merely love children, they adored them, especially Lena. I advised her to adopt a child, but she hesitated and couldn't make up her mind. "One can always do that!" But time passed, and as I looked at her pale face with the wide-spaced eyes, and her greying hair (she started to go grey early), I thought, "Yes always, but it's time." But then it turned out that it was not only not too late, but not even necessary, for across the landing from the Rubakins an officer came to live who had a three-year-old daughter named Katya, a rosy-cheeked, plump little girl with funny, straight hair fastened back with a round comb. Her face was trustful and friendly and her eyes were blue. Her mother was dead. At the Rubakins Katya felt herself at home. "Where've you been?" "But you won't go out any more?" "Is that a new dress?" The little girl's questions were heard from time to time in the Rubakins' room. Lena was very attached to Katya and often talked about her, and I always thought that at those moments she became prettier, both outwardly and inwardly.

* * *

Victor had finished his thesis, and I took it, not without some trepidation, to Valentin Sergeyevich, who liked, and had made it an established custom, to cast his eye over every new thesis. In the introductory chapter Victor sharply criticized Lapshin, one of Valentin Sergeyevich's Rostov pupils, who had tried to study the process of inflammation in a test-tube, basing his work exclusively on chemical factors and entirely neglecting the living organism. Victor objected to such a "test-tube" conception of inflammation, and, of course, he was quite right to do so.

Kramov perused the first page, which began with a brief statement of those under whose guidance the work had been carried out. His own name stood first, and, strangely enough, I noticed that this quite commonplace fact made his face brighten up; he had looked tired that day, with bags under the eyes and pale cheeks hanging down over his starched collar. He had been on his guard when he took up the thesis in his hands, but now resumed his politely indifferent manner.

"Is it a good piece of work?"

"Talented."

"Well, that's excellent. Our young people are growing up! Before we know where we are we'll have to move over to the stove. Have you thought about opponents?"

"No, Valentin Sergeyevich."

"Perhaps Krupensky? And what about the other?"

I said nothing.

"Well, all right, we'll talk about it another time. Meanwhile please pass the thesis on to Dogadov." (Dogadov was secretary to the Academic Council.) "He'll make a report, we'll fix the day, and then, as they say, it'll be in God's hands. By the way, Tatyana Petrovna...."

And he talked to me about something quite different.

Usually the director did not nominate opponents: this was one of the responsibilities of the Academic Council. He had nominated Krupensky, however, this time, and when I left Valentin Sergeyevich I roamed for a long time through the corridors with an unpleasant feeling before returning to the lab, where Victor was anxiously waiting for me. I didn't tell him that the director had looked at the first page but not at the last, where the conclusions were set out.

Everything seemed to be in order. Dogadov examined the thesis and reported on it to the Academic Council. The Council named Krupensky as the first opponent, which was to be expected, while the second was a pleasant surprise—Lavrov. Victor read a paper at a meeting of the Moscow Society of Microbiologists, and a note on this paper, which was highly praised in the discussion (too highly, in my view), appeared in the *Medical Worker*. Kolomnin, who was fond of Victor and for that very reason always treated him very strictly, edited his article, publication of which in the *Journal of Microbiology, Epidemiology and Immunology* we decided to delay until after he had defended his thesis. Lavrov presented his opinion on it: he carefully pointed out the shortcomings, estimated the value of the work objectively, and summed up to the effect that the post-graduate student Merzlyakov had written a work which was outstandingly good for a post-graduate student.

In short, there was not the slightest ground for disquiet, and it only remained to scold the future M.Sc., who, after handing in his thesis, looked pale and washed-out, and began saying that he ought to have worked on it for another six months at least.

Only one thing worried me. Although Krupensky gave approval for the thesis to be defended, he delayed presenting his opinion on it until there were only a few days left before the defence was due to take place. There were a few other signs and portents, though, which gave food for thought. Thus, going into the library one day I disturbed a conversation between Krupensky and a woman colleague.

"But who can deny that Merzlyakov is an able man?" Krupensky was asking, looking his companion straight in the face with his prominent grey eyes. "He's more than that, he's a man of talent. That's why we're obliged. . . ."

I sat down at a table not far from them, and their conversation stopped. I was alarmed, too, by a conversation I had with Diligentov. In his time Valentin Sergeyevich had invited Diligentov to join the staff of our Institute—that same noble, independent, liberal scientist, formerly connected with Zemstvo circles, who at the inaugural meeting of the Moscow Society of Microbiologists had spoken against the young scientists' declaration. Why had he been brought in? Nobody at the Institute knew the answer. Not only had Diligentov long since lost any connection with science, but in his old age he had become simply stupid, and spoke mainly in interjections, which obviously expressed quite fully his uncomplicated thoughts. Here, then, was this garrulous old man, meeting me in the hall and talking to me about Victor's thesis, which he said he had just read:

"It shouldn't be, eh? Somewhat softer, eh? Indirectly, eh? And then.... Yes, yes, yes! Why these general ideas?"

When I began to offer objections, he at once agreed with me.

## THE DEFENCE

Just as in any real work of art one can always discern the personality of the author with his unique characteristics, so in this, his first major work, Victor displayed distinctly his personality as a scientist. He had a keen, enterprising mind which always strove to widen the limits of the task before him, and this was evident in every experiment, on every page. His conclusions, though sometimes premature, always penetrated to the root, to the very sources of the phenomenon. This came out with especial force in his thesis. He knew how to criticize the antiquated scientific terms, which biologists had been using unthinkingly for dozens of years, while understanding by the old, familiar words newer and still newer ideas. Victor was, in fact, a little too fond of doing this, so that our team cautiously restrained his historical researches, which were sometimes hardly necessary.

He made mistakes, of course. But his ideas were bold; that was what one couldn't help noticing and appreciating. I don't intend to talk about his ideas in detail, but will only mention that Victor showed the curative effect of sleep on an organism infected by bacteria.

Underlying sleep therapy was Pavlov's teaching on the protective inhibition of the nervous system. Zaozersky had published in 1926 his observations on rodents which could not be infected with plague while they were hibernating, no matter what enormous doses of plague microbes were used. Sleep obstructed the disease. When hibernation ceased the microbes began their work. During sleep the animal was protected from plague, but when it awoke it caught the disease and died.

Victor, following up these observations, studied the influence of prolonged sleep on various phenomena connected with the inflammatory reaction of the organism, and obtained fresh, original conclusions. The object of his study, moreover, was the organism as a whole, and his conclusions presented in a new way the problem of non-susceptibility as a general biological process. Thus, the importance of external, environmental factors received fresh experimental confirmation.

* * *

"Merzlyakov, Victor Alexeyevich, born 1914. Father formerly sailor, wireless-telegraphist, served in Baltic Fleet, now foreman of winding workshop in Factory No. 106. Mother—housewife. On completing secondary education, V. A. Merzlyakov entered the biological department of Moscow University. While still a student, began work under guidance of P. N. Rubakin at the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes. Having graduated ahead of the usual time. . . ."

The learned secretary's voice sounded equable and passionless. "Don't imagine that I'm seriously interested in the life and doings of this V. A. Merzlyakov," this voice of his said to us. "I am reading his biography because I have to; so far as I am concerned it is of strictly no importance at all that the afore-mentioned post-graduate is a member of the Komsomol, nor that his first work received a prize at the Students' All-Union Scientific Conference and the thanks of the People's Commissar."

"Having graduated ahead of the usual time from Moscow State University, V. A. Merzlyakov was registered as a post-graduate student at the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes, where he took up, under the supervision of T. P. Vlasenkova, the study of the inhibitory influence of narcotic sleep upon inflammatory processes. Having passed the prescribed tests. . . ."

The day was bright and frosty. The sunshine, breaking into the little conference room, did its best to enliven our sedate gathering—now playing gaily upon the metal inkstand in front of the secretary; now falling in tremulous, bright bands across the green table-cloth behind which sat the members of the Academic Council; now, growing bolder, stealing up to the director himself and striking directly upon his pince-nez. Reflections ran across the mirror-like marble of the fire-place. Blinking nervously the director wiped his pince-nez.

The biography having duly been recited, the secretary of the Academic Council passed on to deal with the supervisor's testimonial, then to that from the Komsomol organization. The first, as was the custom, was brief and reserved; the second tried not merely to inform but to convince all concerned that Victor Merzlyakov had always been a front-rank member of the Komsomol, with a responsible attitude to all his social duties.

Victor had grown up during the last few days, yet still seemed almost a boy among the members of the Academic Council, some of whom were grey and others bald. He went up to the blackboard on which his diagrams were hung and began to read his paper. It was due to last only twenty minutes, but he wanted to explain, to expound, to prove so much! Passing over the polemical aspect of the question (Lavrov had insisted on this) and refraining from going into details which, though fascinating, diverged from his main propositions (this, Kolomnin had advised), he held forth, his thin, pale face becoming redder every minute.

Before the defence he had told me that he would only be frightened for the first minute that he was speaking. "There," I thought, "the first minute's gone, and the second and the third, too. How thin he's got, poor lad. I hadn't noticed before how thin he'd got."

"A fine friend," I thought as I looked at Krupensky, who sat hunched up at the table, staring vaguely ahead with his bulging, owlish eyes. "He delayed giving his opinion until the last moment; yet he hadn't a single serious objection to offer. Well, *he'll* probably vote against Victor. And yet . . . who was it called him 'the mirror man'? Valentin Sergeyevich will vote for Victor, and Krupensky will automatically 'reflect' what Valentin Sergeyevich does."

"Valentin Sergeyevich will undoubtedly vote for Victor, of course he will," I went on thinking, as Victor, holding a pointer like a rapier, advanced to the board on which his diagrams were hanging. "He's too clever to give battle on a rank-and-file post-graduate thesis. Whether he likes it or not, this thesis is 'his,' it's from 'his own' Institute. It can't happen! Most likely, he'll behave as though nothing had happened.

"But yet that's the queer thing," I found myself thinking, as I listened attentively to Victor's paper, now drawing to its close. "If you try to sum up the whole of our Academic Council at a glance, it's clear that the dividing line running through them starts from Kramov and separates them into two groups according to what their attitude is to him. Some of them—Krupensky, Dogadov, Diligentov, Belskaya, and Kartuzova from the City Institute—fix their attention on him; they even sit half-turned towards him. Others—Kolomnin, Rubakin, Karayev—act independently. Kramov, and attitudes to Kramov, bulk too large in our thinking, more at any rate than the interests of the work demand. He doesn't unite people, he divides them; odd that I didn't notice that before. Does this hinder the work? Yes, of course it does. And the fact that I'm now anxiously weighing up 'pros' and 'cons' and that I'm not sure whether the most gifted of our young workers will succeed in defending his able work is a proof of a bad state of affairs which ought to have been brought before this same Academic Council long ago, and brought up in the Party Committee of the Institute and the District Party Committee as well."

"And so, prolonged sleep, preventing the development of damage to the tissue. . . ."

I looked at the clock; and what a pity that I did. Following my example, the director looked at the clock—the Chairman of the Academic Council, Valentin Sergeyevich Kramov in person, who, as was widely known, did not like these papers to last longer than twenty minutes. Excessively well dressed, in a new black suit, he was listening attentively and with interest; it was evident, however strange it might seem, that he liked Victor's work. He jotted something down, then cast his pencil aside, and with a self-satisfied expression passed his little hand over his almost bald head.

Victor was passing to his conclusions—at last! I had in any case advised him to prepare a condensed peroration and to read it calmly if it turned out that the allotted amount of time was insufficient. It wasn't necessary. Finishing, he pushed his hair back from his brow with a chalk-smeared hand. With a movement which his agitation deprived of conscious control he leant his pointer against the board. It fell down. Embarrassed, he picked it up and laid it on a corner of the table at which sat the members of the Academic Council. The Chairman smiled and, following him, Dogadov, Krupensky, and the others smiled, too.

Everything was going along satisfactorily. The post-graduate student had finished his paper. His first opponent, Professor Krupensky, was called upon to speak.

In his opinion the subject of Victor's thesis was interesting and promising and approached a wide range of still unsolved problems. Had the subject been correctly chosen in the given case, however? The laboratory where the student worked was faced with quite different problems. Was this fact not apparent, for example, in his selection of sources? Professor Krupensky answered this question affirmatively. Furthermore he had to note with regret that the student, while showing a certain degree of familiarity with specialist publications, had ignored some important theoretical questions, the significance of which in relation to his subject was very great indeed. Was it possible, indeed, when studying the influence of narcotic sleep on inflammatory diseases, to underestimate the importance of physico-chemical factors in the process of inflammation?

"Aha! That means Krupensky reckons that Victor's slighted the Kramov theory, then? Very good!"

Everything was going well. Professor Krupensky considered that, despite a number of material shortcomings, the work under consideration was worthy of acceptance as a thesis for the degree of M.Sc. Now it was the turn of the second opponent, Vasily Fyodorovich Lavrov.

The second opponent could not, he regretted, agree with the first. First of all, the thesis had been written on his own subject, and the student's supervisor had been quite right in allowing him complete freedom of action. As regards....

How well the defence was going! True, nearly all of them, bar Lavrov, spoke about anything except the essence of the matter. Diligentov, trying to express his thoughts, not only with exclamations but also with other parts of speech, reproached Victor with an incorrect quotation. He was mistaken; Victor had quoted correctly. I passed a note to Kolomnin: "They are slurring over the point." I received the answer: "They simply don't know what the problem is." Excellent, if true!

The discussion was drawing to a close. Who still wanted to speak? Nobody. The Chairman proposed the election of tellers. They were elected. The secretary distributed the ballot-papers. Was Merzlyakov, Victor Alexeyevich, worthy of the academic degree of M.Sc.? Underline either "agreed" or "not agreed." Yes, or no? If it was yes, nobody could stop him rising up and up, to see more and further. If it was no, he would have either to reconcile himself to failure or else to begin his work all over again. He'd have to find in himself the strength to overcome lack of self-confidence, bitterness, and disappointment. There were thousands of other possibilities. Was it worth continuing to knock at closed doors? Couldn't one study science while remaining a rank-and-file laboratory worker, a demonstrator?

The tellers withdrew into the adjoining room and the most difficult moment of any defence had come. I went up to Victor.

"There now, Vitya, you see how splendidly everything went. And yet you were afraid."

He pressed my hand hard and said:

"It's not over yet."

No, it wasn't over yet. Counting the votes did not take long. The door opened and the tellers resumed their places at the Council table.

"Having examined, in accordance with the instructions of the All-Union Committee for Higher Education on procedure for applying the decree of the Council of People's Commissars dated March 20, 1937, the thesis on the subject. . . ."

I glanced at Kramov, whose face suddenly became cold, with a flat, expressionless look; then at Victor, who was listening with his head lifted high and lips pressed together so firmly that his stubborn white chin stuck out.

"And to the question, 'Is Merzlyakov, Victor Alexeyevich, worthy of the academic degree of Master of Medical Science?' we have replied. . . ."

An indefinable tremor ran across the faces, a tremor which reverberated sharply, sickeningly, in my heart. Surely not....

Yes, seven votes for, ten votes against. Not worthy.

## ABOUT FRESH AIR

"We are all to blame, but you more than any of us"; that was what I heard, whether they meant me or not, in everything that Kolomnin, Lena, and Lavrov said. The whole team in our lab thought just that, there could be no doubt about it at all. I hadn't seen Rubakin since the defence, but the mere thought of the talk with him which was to come weighed more and more heavily on my heart.

Tired and downcast I returned home at one in the morning. Andrei had gone away the previous day and Agnia Petrovna and Pavlik were staying at our summer cottage. Our rooms seemed deserted, as always in the summer, and there was nobody to stop me pacing up and down and thinking over what had happened. And what had happened called for thought.

Had it been an accident? No! A calculated, premeditated, subtle tactical move: that was what had happened before our eyes. And wasn't it really subtle, to speak "for" and to vote "against"?

To whose interest was it that a talented thesis should be rejected? Kramov's?

There could only be one reason: he was convinced that in the last analysis Victor's work was directed against his theory. It was a threat to the "school"! His unquestioned scientific authority, his honoured and respected name were in danger! But wouldn't his recognition of such a danger mean that, at the same time, he recognized the weakness of his own position? Could Kramov possibly not understand this?

"Well, perhaps he doesn't understand it," I went on thinking, as I washed in the dark, and with an effort held back from plunging my flushed face under the cold water. After all, what Victor had done was only to seek persistently for conformity to some general biological law. True, he had mocked at the nonsensical notion of "inflammation in a test-tube," cherished by Lapshin: could this have been enough?... Oh, damn; perhaps I ought to have advised Victor to strike out that page?

"But what nonsense am I thinking?" I felt horrified at the idea within a minute of considering it. "He ought not to have hidden his views, but should have spoken out openly against the Kramov theory; that's what I ought to have insisted on."

It was beginning to grow light when, throwing my dressing-gown round my shoulders, I opened the window and started pacing the room once more. The morning was cool. "I'll cool off, then I'll get warm and go to sleep." This was a specific against sleeplessness which I always found helpful. Letters and newspapers lay on the table, and I recalled that when I returned from the Institute I hadn't opened my post. My communication about lysozyme had appeared in the press long ago, but people were still writing to me to ask my advice and to express indignation that the new drug was not yet on sale. There were some letters of this kind in my last post. When I had read them I unfolded the newspaper—and on to the table fell yet another letter, from my father.

We had been writing to each other since he had seen the paragraph about me in *Izvestia*, and though what he wrote mainly consisted of disquisitions on how important storage work was for the development of transport in the Soviet Union, nevertheless I now knew a lot about my father, and what I knew made me happy. He had been working for five years in the luggage office at one of the smaller stations on the Amur Railway. For five years! That was in itself very unlike him. He had given up drinking—not at once, as his late wife had so imprudently done, but gradually, in accordance with an "original" system which he had devised himself. His mind evidently no longer ran on buried treasure.

One of his letters had enclosed a photograph showing a wistful-looking, grey-moustached man with a little nose, who looked out at me with kindly eyes; and as I looked at that photograph I failed, perhaps for the first time in my life, to experience as I always used to when I thought about my father—a mixed feeling of pity and shame, bitterness and consternation.

He asked several times, persistently, whether I'd succeeded in finding Pavel Petrovich's manuscripts. Our last conversation in Leningrad, when I told him that my whole life depended on whether these papers were found, had evidently remained in his memory and worried him. "In any case, the incident's not closed!" he exclaimed in this letter, too. "I couldn't give up the search even if you were to ask me to. I may be able to get hold of Rayevsky's address through people from Lopakhin, whom I often run into. And once we have his address, I advise you to have the fellow locked up, in accordance with the law."

I lay down on the bed and got warm, but didn't go off to sleep. "If only we could find Rayevsky! True, when Mitya and I were at his flat in Leningrad he said that all he'd got from Father were Krechetova's letters, and didn't answer our question about Pavel Petrovich's other papers. But years and years have passed since then. Perhaps he wouldn't hide the truth now? People change with the years, and perhaps he's changed, too?"

I began to drop off, but then it was as though somebody nudged me and sleep vanished as completely as if it had never been there!

"What was I thinking of? Ah, yes. Victor ought to have declared himself openly in opposition to Kramov. But could he oppose a complex theory on the basis of partial data only? Of course not. It was I who could and should have objected to it, and yet I hadn't even tried to understand why this theory, which used to be clear to me, had begun to seem vague and unclear as the years passed. Yes, I knew this, but not any better than the others. I ought to have examined critically the work on which this theory was based, and to have thought out its points of departure. But I didn't do either the one or the other. Why not?"

The sharp, big-nosed face of Krupensky loomed from out of the drowsiness which flowed over me, and I felt with relief that at last I was going off to sleep. He was talking about Victor, and I had to listen to him because between us stood a long green table on which lay pencils and paper. . . .

I fell asleep as the sun's first rays slid obliquely into the room and the facets of the green glass doors of the bookcase gleamed reassuringly.

* * *

It was already dark, and the towels drying on the bushes in the little garden in front of the house showed brightly white. The light from the Rubakins' window fell on the elder-tree, and I thought of something southern as I looked at those luxuriant bushes, sharply outlined in the darkness. "The light's on; that's good, they must be at home." But only Pyotr Nikolayevich was at home; Lena was at the theatre, seeing the play *Tanya*. A few days before I had attended the first night of this play, and had praised it to my colleagues at the Institute and advised them all to go and see it.

"I hope I haven't disturbed you?"

"No, doctor, I was expecting you."

Apparently I'd caught Rubakin in the midst of some work which he wasn't able to tear himself away from at once. Twice he squinted at a manuscript from under his glasses, then he couldn't refrain any longer but quickly jotted down some phrase or other.

"How's Victor?" he asked. "Very upset?"

"Yes."

We were silent.

"Well, now we must put our heads together, doctor.... What was it that really happened there under our very noses?"

"What happened was that Kramov caught us in a trap."

"And it hadn't struck you that this could have happened?"

"No; especially as Victor didn't declare openly that his conclusions contradict Kramov's theory."

"That's just where he slipped up."

"Maybe. But he didn't have facts enough for a direct attack."

Rubakin took a journal from the table and opened it at a page which was turned down.

"Have you had the last number of the *Journal of Microbiology, Epidemiology and Immunology* yet?"

"Not yet."

"Well, look."

I scanned the article. "Kramov," "the Kramov school," "the Kramov approach to problems"—these words were repeated on every page. The article was by Krupensky. In one place, underlined by Pyotr Nikolayevich, Victor was mentioned. I read, hardly able to believe my eyes. Krupensky had briefly stated what the thesis contained and then attacked it in a harsh, contemptuous tone.

"The scoundrel!"

"A fine one, too! As official opponent he becomes acquainted with an unpublished work; he scarcely offers any objection to it either in his written opinion or in his remarks at the defence, yet he had already run it down in the press! Tomorrow we'll invite him to attend the open meeting of the Party Committee. Incidentally, I'll invite you, too, doctor. We're going to discuss the question of how to organize theoretical discussion in the Institute."

"I'll come, Pyotr Nikolayevich."

He was silent, looking at me.

"Yet, you know, we ought to have foreseen what happened, Tatyana."

"We? No, I. Who should have if I didn't, Pyotr Nikolayevich? But I was confused myself and lost my head. You and I had often talked about how the laboratory was working without the confidence it used to have, how it had hardly achieved anything during the last two years."

"Yes. But to help you I ought to have said to myself: Kramov's wrong. And I had to think a great deal before pronouncing those two words. I had to check his work, to understand where it sprang from, what it had achieved, what place his school occupied in the scientific world. Have you ever thought about this, Tatyana?"

"I've thought about it. But I feel that to do this one would have to look at life through his and not through one's own eyes."

"Exactly. And now let's look at life through his eyes. First of all, what can we say about him as a scientist, not in general, of course, but as a figure in Soviet science? He's a man of great gifts. I've read everything that he's written. But in him we have a scientist who has, in fact, long ceased to participate in the uphill struggle for progress, which is fundamental to our science. When this happened to him I don't know. One can't see the day, the month, the year when the change occurred. It was prepared gradually, little by little. Suddenly he realizes that no one remembers his first, talented works, that the major work he produced in the 1920's, which till recently stood on the bookshelf of every serious microbiologist, has become obsolete, and that to bring out a new edition would mean rewriting every page. That he'd have to go to the lab every morning and work, with head and hands; and think, think and think again!... A troublesome business! And, meanwhile, other people's patient, acute thought is living, seething, and throbbing all around him, and science is doing things, yes, doing things—rich, many-sided, inseparably linked with the rich and many-sided life of our country. And it's not enough just to watch this extending and deepening life, one must take part in it, and take part in accordance with the exalted position one occupies in the world of science. That's the problem. One's got to put up a show! Well, what about in his solitude, during sleepless nights, when he's not putting up a show before anybody? What does he think about as he turns on himself that impassive, cold, appraising gaze of his? They're not keeping pace with him, they're not holding back, they're passing him on all sides! The young people are going forward. That's bad, what's he to do with these young people? And so, gradually, unnoticeably, and perhaps glancing from time to time at people who thought of this idea before he did, he begins to think about taking a different path. Yesterday, in fact, he felt with painful acuteness just how precarious his position was. Yesterday he was afraid that others—young people for whom he was still a great authority, a weighty name in science—were suspecting or had already suspected it. But today boundless prospects open before him. Today he appears in the arena as the founder of a doctrine, the creator of a theory which seeks to embrace the most general problems of science. But the theory is only one side of his calculated manœuvre. He won't get far on a theory alone. To make it effective he needs people. He needs followers, pupils, organizers. . . . Of course, all this is only a working hypothesis, doctor. But it has helped me to understand a great deal."

Rubakin was silent. His brow was smooth, his lips pressed together, and his pink-cheeked kindly face wore a stern, fixed expression.

"Don't think I'm justifying myself, Tatyana. I'm more to blame than you. First, because I began to doubt too late in the day. Secondly, because for a long time I didn't realize that the whole Institute was on a false track; I didn't realize it because some headway was being made. And it was made because we have a lot of able people, working not only in our lab but in Krupensky's, Dogadov's, Belskaya's, too; because facts remain facts, regardless of wrong direction of work. I hesitated, wavered; Kramov's authority put me off, his services, his great name in science. But now, do you know what I want to tell you, doctor? Cheer up! Why be so downhearted? All's for the best. Kolomnin called Victor's thesis an explosion in a test-tube. But the explosion really occurred in the Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes. Windows were smashed, doors blew open. Fresh air—a splendid thing!"

## A VANISHED WORLD

This wasn't the first time I had felt as if I lost my grip on my work the moment Andrei went away. "Andreilessness?" Lena asked me, sympathetically.

Never before, however, had this "Andreilessness" been so vexing, so deeply felt. Life had suddenly become very complicated; and who but he could say the few words needed for everything to fall into place?

At the Institute a new line-up of forces was taking shape. Everything was mixed up and in confusion in our laboratory; we were aware that we had been approaching these decisive days with nebulous, imprecise conclusions, we felt awkward among ourselves, and had a sense of common guilt towards Victor—guilt and embarrassment, at the very time when we should have been supporting him calmly and skilfully. And on top of this confusion came an accidental meeting, carrying me back to an old story from which life had drawn me away a long time ago.

* * *

It was the day before the Party Committee was due to meet. I was travelling to Choboty (we had hired a room at Choboty, on the Kiev line, for Pavlik and Agnia Petrovna for the summer) and on the way my attention was caught by a stout man with a cap pulled down over his eyes. There was something familiar about his red, swollen face.

When the train drew in to the station I went into the buffet to buy a slab of chocolate for Pavlik. The man was greedily knocking back a beer at the bar, his head tilted. His eyes squinted and the hand holding his glass trembled slightly. I couldn't very well stare at him but, as I paid for my purchase, I thought again, "Where have I seen that man before?" The very feeling of disgusted watchfulness which he aroused in me was a remembered one, and seemed to be attached to him and no one else.

He drank up, thrust his hand in his pocket, threw a crumpled ruble note on the wet bar counter, and then, as sharply and distinctly as one sees things when light breaks suddenly into a dark room, I realized who this man was. I recognized his hateful, contemptible gesture. "Rayevsky! But how could it be? So old and grey, so dirty? Wearing such a torn, greasy jacket?"

I followed him out of the buffet. He hailed a woman who was selling sunflower seeds on the platform and stopped to talk to her. I turned as I went towards the barrier beyond which began the road to Choboty. They were standing and talking; then the woman laughed and picked up her bag, and they walked the length of the station platform, he in front and she a little behind.

"Yes, it must be Rayevsky. Why didn't I go up to him, then? Suppose he's just accidentally turned up on this station, and lives in some other town a long way away? What stupid shyness held me back?"

Worried, I walked quickly through the settlement, picked up Pavlik, who was playing on the green, overgrown path, and flew into our kitchen, where Agnia Petrovna, who now wore spectacles instead of pince-nez, was standing at the stove and with a proud expression tasting the soup with a wooden spoon.

"Agnia Petrovna, do you know who I've just met at the station? Rayevsky!"

"What Rayevsky? From Lopakhin?"

"Yes!"

She pondered.

"Avdotya Petrovna" (that was the woman who brought us milk) "told me some time ago that somebody named Rayevsky was her next-door neighbour."

"And you didn't tell me?"

"But the one you mean was a respectable man. His father was a bank manager in Lopakhin. Whereas this one.... She complains about him every day. Sometimes he throws rubbish over the fence, sometimes he chucks sticks at her hens. No, he can't be the same one. After all, there are a lot of Rayevskys."

* * *

A handsome bitch, her ears pricked up, barked viciously as soon as I opened the gate a little, chickens cackled anxiously, a goose rushed at me with her wings outspread and her neck outstretched angrily. You couldn't say they received visitors very hospitably at this house. The same pudgy man with the swollen face whom I had seen at the station came down from the porch of the little verandah.

"What do you want?"

The bitch barked and he kicked her away roughly.

"Does Rayevsky live here?"

"That's me. What's your business?"

Something like a succession of living portraits passed before my mind's eye at that instant. First, a fat *gymnasium* pupil, standing with his coat hanging open outside the fortune-teller's door, his face sweaty and worried under his fur cap. Then, an impudent, darkly ironical fellow trying to persuade me to steal the famous actress's letters from Pavel Petrovich. Next, a well-fed, self-satisfied Nepman escorting a beautiful woman into the restaurant lounge.... The portraits became dim and dissolved. A flabby, degenerate man with waxen folds of skin hanging beneath his chin and a dirty Adam's apple sticking out of the collar of his greasy blue jacket was looking into my face with anxiously-blinking eyes.

"Don't you recognize me?"

"No."

"My name is Vlasenkova. I'm a doctor, a scientist. We have met before. I must have a talk with you."

He hesitated. Then he muttered, reluctantly, "Come in."

A small, dirty verandah. A deal table, on which lay some very large, yellow, over-ripe cucumbers, a pumpkin, and a turnip. Some frames made of fragments of glass crudely fixed together with putty. A low, ragged seat taken from a car; I couldn't bring myself to sit on this, and instead, the master of the house, taking his tobacco pouch from his pocket, sat down on it.

"Where have we met before?"

He broke off the last word in a strange way and then I heard an inarticulate noise, a kind of muttering, as though somebody finishing the word for him.

"I'm from Lopakhin, like you. One day, many years ago, you came to our place there. At that time I was still at school and living with my father. But it wasn't my father you came to see, it was me. With a certain request.... Do you remember?"

"No."

"The request concerned Dr. Pavel Petrovich Lebedev. The whole town knew him—you included."

He was silently pouring shag from his pouch into a scrap of newspaper.

"All right, so I knew him. What about it?"

"A few years later.... It was in Leningrad. I came to see you with Dmitri Dmitrich Lvov. He asked you to return to him some notes belonging to Pavel Petrovich, who was dead by then—notes which, according to his information and mine, were in your possession."

"What notes? I don't remember any."

"How can you not remember? You published the letters of the actress Krechetova.... My father handed them over to you. But, besides these letters, amongst Pavel Petrovich's papers there were these notes. Dmitri Dmitrich asked you for them, but you refused to give them up. Later, when you'd left Leningrad, I tried to find out where these notes were. I went to the Procurator. I wrote to the Criminal Investigation Department."

He rolled his cigarette and fastened his pouch.

"Yes. Now I remember. So it was thanks to you that they came worrying me?"

"Who did?"

"Those people you wrote to. Why were you so concerned about those notes?"

Again he broke off the last word and a noise, a sort of muttering, was heard, as though somebody else was talking.

"First, they form a scientific work of great importance. Secondly, they belonged to a man who was near and dear to me."

Rayevsky smoked in silence. It seemed that it was only now that he recognized me. A movement of interest ran across his heavy face with the long, dark bags under the eyes.

"Ah, yes; but you've altered a great deal. A doctor, did you say?"

"Yes."

"Do you teach?"

"No, I'm in scientific research."

"And how did you find out my address? From Glafira?"

"No. This morning I ran into you on the station."

The cigarette went out. He fumbled in his pocket, then went into the room. The door remained half-open. A wooden couch, a pillow without a pillow-case, a hay mattress covered with a torn counterpane. Vegetables on the window-sill and on the floor: was he a market-gardener? The place, uncared-for and full of the smell of tobacco, was evidently the dwelling of a solitary and unsociable man. He came back and sat down again.

"When Mitka and you came to my flat in Leningrad he told me that only a specialist could judge the value of those notes. Right?"

"Yes."

"Well, I turned them over to a specialist."

"Who was the specialist? What was his name?"

He smoked in silence.

"What does his name matter to you? Are you going to look him up?"

"Most certainly I am. Does he live in Moscow?"

"Yes, he lives in Moscow.... You'll get nothing out of him."

"Do you think so? Well, we'll see. After the author's death (and this I know for a fact) a scientific work becomes State property. This specialist of yours either concealed this work or made use of it: either way, he'll have to answer to the law."

Rayevsky got up. The bags under his eyes darkened. His heavy face filled with blood.

"That's good," he said slowly. "That is good. His name's Kramov."

* * *

The story he told me was such a simple one that maybe that was the very reason it hadn't occurred to me before. My father had given Rayevsky, along with Krechetova's letters, all the other papers from Pavel Petrovich's trunk, including a folder which was inscribed, Rayevsky remembered: "Protective Forces. Volume I. Microbes and Tissues.".

The head of the Vremya Publishing House had been seriously concerned about his future in the autumn of 1927, and his alarm was well justified. The day Mitya and I called on him he had been busy sorting out documents connected with his publishing work. Pavel Petrovich's manuscript had been lying on his table, and had we come a couple of hours later it would have been chucked into the waste-paper basket along with other unwanted manuscripts. The idea that it had scientific value was first suggested to Rayevsky by Mitya.

"You, to the best of my knowledge, are a publisher of trashy novels in translation." Rayevsky repeated the phrase of Mitya's, which he had remembered. "But this is a work of importance for our science."

Whether to publish the manuscript or to sell it, that was the question before Rayevsky when we left him. It was too late to publish it, however, for private publishing houses were already being closed down one after another. He must sell it, then; must find a suitable purchaser who would not be specially interested in the, so to speak, legal aspect of the matter, and sell it to him. Such a purchaser was found and brought to him by Glafira Sergeyevna.

...Naturally I didn't inquire what relations existed at that time between Rayevsky and Glafira Sergeyevna. They must have been amicable otherwise she would not have taken such an intimate part in the affair. Their relations were lasting, they had gone on for years....

Anyway, the introduction was effected and the manuscript handed over, and Kramov, apparently, found it interesting. "I have heard of the author," he said, "and have even read one of his works." And he had taken the manuscript back to Moscow, promising to give an opinion on it.

As to what happened soon after this conversation, Rayevsky told me about it reluctantly, through his teeth. On account of some "fiddle" with *object d'art* he was banished from Leningrad and spent several years in the North. Glafira Sergeyevna had helped him from time to time.

"You don't know her; she's kind-hearted," I remembered. "For years she's been sending money to a poor relation of hers who finds it hard to make ends meet."

Rayevsky had returned in 1934, not to Leningrad but to somewhere near Moscow, where a food-shop manager he knew had promised to appoint him supply-agent. It didn't work out—and there he was, up against it; while planning to take up the modest occupation of a market-gardener, he remembered Glafira Sergeyevna. What could he count on now, when she had become the wife of a well-known scientist? I thought that it might have been just this that had inspired Rayevsky, but I was mistaken. He had placed his hopes on old friendship.

"Madame has a weakness for me," he said with a frank grin.

This time, however, the "weakness" didn't operate for long. Twice Rayevsky managed to replenish his capital, but then Glafira Sergeyevna apparently began to fear that such an association might harm her good name. And Kramov had threatened to call the militia, if Rayevsky dared to come again....

There was nothing surprising in this tale. Rayevsky was depressed and full of spite, and he had nothing to lose. I hardly had any doubt, therefore, that what I was hearing was the truth. Only one thing seemed improbable—that Valentin Sergeyevich should have kept the manuscript at his place and never said a word about it to anyone. Had he concealed it and made use of it to his own advantage? That was unlikely; in our day, when every idea is founded on dozens of experiments dependent on the technical level reached by science, it is hard to exploit an old work. Had he used its theoretical aspect? I hadn't noticed it. But why, then, had Kramov kept it to himself?

I thanked Rayevsky for his candid story, said good-bye to him and left, as though tearing myself away from this world of sordid calculations, dirty tricks and low, hidden passions in which a lofty creation of pure human thought had vanished.

* * *

As I had always done, when I found myself confronted by a mystery as yet unsolved, I read over my notes from the lectures which Pavel Petrovich had once given to the Komsomols of Lopakhin. It was like listening to his gentle, enthusiastic yet austere voice, which had so long been silent, just as a musician, when tuning his instrument, listens to the tuning-fork. And I was always aware that my muddled notes were only a dim shadow of that immense work to which Pavel Petrovich had devoted his noble life.

True, I also thought of something else. When I was a child, sleepy little Lopakhin had seemed to me a great, noisy city, with broad streets and lofty houses. Perhaps when

I returned to Pavel Petrovich's manuscript it would be like returning years afterwards to the home-town of one's childhood, and I should find nothing but antiquated ideas of no interest to anybody, and lying off the main track of science? But not at all. Hadn't Mitya been thunderstruck when, after looking through my notes one day, I told him that the old doctor considered viruses to be "a special form of protein, which leads us to the border-line between living and non-living matter?" Had this profound idea lost its significance nowadays? The hope that the time would come when, at last, I should read his extraordinary, forward-looking book again stirred joyfully within me.

And now the book had been found! It was unbelievable! My youth seemed to have found justice, too. And the name, unknown to any, of Pavel Petrovich Lebedev would find its deserved high place in our Russian, Soviet science!

## A FEW DAYS

At this meeting everything we had been thinking, arguing and worrying about in the previous few days became tangible and real. In his address Rubakin hardly touched upon "immuno-chemistry"; probably he didn't wish his attitude on this to influence the discussion. "Why did the thesis submitted by Merzlyakov, a Komsomol member and one of the able post-graduate students of our Institute, fail?" That was the fundamental question which he put before the Party Committee. "Was it that the poor quality of the work prevented the members of the Academic Council from considering the author worthy of a master's degree, or was there some extraneous reason?"

I was the first to ask to speak, and began by saying that at the meeting of the Academic Council nobody had said that the quality of the work was poor. The first opponent, Professor Krupensky, though he pointed to some shortcomings, had nevertheless considered the author worthy of the master's degree. Academician Nikolsky had recently read

Merzlyakov's thesis and had immediately invited him to transfer to his Institute. The reason for the rejection of Merzlyakov's thesis lay in theoretical differences, which it had long been time to bring out into the open, concealing nothing. The physico-chemical trend in immunology had developed in disregard of Mechnikov's concept of non-susceptibility, that was why new and surprising facts found no explanation in it. Merzlyakov was to be blamed only for not making use of these new facts for a criticism, analysis and exposure of the Kramov theory. This, however, was not his fault but mine. I, as his research supervisor, had been in duty bound to define my attitude to the differences I had mentioned earlier. That was my responsibility, to give the work its general direction, to reinforce and make more precise the positions from which the Kramov theory should be criticized.

Krupensky then spoke. Flashing his prominent, owlish eyes, pulling down his jacket every minute, he rushed into battle with fury, spite, and indignation. He could not believe his ears as he listened to Tatyana Petrovna. Who had given her the right to defame one of the leading theories of Soviet microbiology? Who had produced proofs of the invalidity of this theory, of its non-correspondence with the tasks before our science—where, and when? He did not know why Merzlyakov's thesis had been rejected. Personally he had been "for" it.

"With one hand 'for' but with the other 'against'?" asked Rubakin.

No, "for" with both hands. If Pyotr Nikolayevich had in mind the article in the *Journal of Microbiology, Epidemiology and Immunology*, well, he, Krupensky, considered that one could not put on the same footing the examination of a thesis, which was an official occasion, and the broad, public discussion of a work. The article he had written bore not the slightest relation to the adjudgement of a master's degree to Merzlyakov, especially as the issue of the journal concerned had appeared the day after the defence.

"And it didn't occur to you to put side by side your 'opinion' and your article?"

Whether it had or not, Krupensky considered this an idle question. He did not see that there was any great difference between the "opinion" and the article. Certain shortcomings which Merzlyakov's thesis had were indicated rather more sharply in the article than in the opinion, because he did not want to stand in the way of an able young scientist by giving a negative opinion, that was all. Did the members of the Party Committee consider the question of the article exhausted?

"No, they don't," Rubakin replied sternly. "What else have you to say?"

He, Krupensky, wanted to say that he found it in the highest degree laughable for Comrade Vlasenkova to assert that the cause of the rejection was some theoretical difference between Merzlyakov and Valentin Sergeyevich Kramov. If those present would pardon him, he involuntarily recalled Krylov's well-known fable about the puppy and the elephant when he heard this statement. There was no dispute between Merzlyakov and Kramov; at least he had not noticed any. Even if there had been such a dispute, however, one would need to have a very lively imagination indeed to suppose that members of the Academic Council who had been working in Soviet science for twenty years would have intentionally concealed their disagreement on this point from a post-graduate student and conspired to blackball him. Why should they? Let the esteemed Tatyana Petrovna answer that question....

* * *

I had hoped to see Valentin Sergeyevich at the Institute, but he did not attend that day. Telephoning him in the evening I arranged to see him in his flat.

Glafira Sergeyevna opened the door to me. She had grown stouter, she looked pale and was wearing a kimono. I had seen little of her since the New Year's Eve party at the Scientists' Club, and I was surprised how much she had aged in six months.

"Come in. I'm very glad to see you," she said simply. "Valentin Sergeyevich is asleep, but I'll go and wake him."

"Don't bother, let him sleep."

"No, it's time anyway. It's past five. Here everything's regulated by the clock."

There was irony in the way she said this—or did I only imagine it?

"How are you, Tatyana Petrovna? And how's Andrei?"

"Well, thanks. He's working hard."

We went into the dining-room, which was spacious and bright, but cold. The glassware glittered coldly in the glass cupboard and the light of the crystal chandelier was coldly reflected in the parquet floor.

"Sit down, Tatyana Petrovna. I know you don't believe I'm glad to see you, but I really am."

"Thank you."

What else could I say in reply?

"I've always felt that you didn't care for me much. You disliked me on account of Mitya. But that's over long ago. How is he? What's he doing?" she asked, blushing. "How's he getting on in Rostov?"

There had always been something which she left unsaid, some sort of calculating *arrière-pensée* which she did her best to conceal, but which nevertheless came out in every word she uttered. But now there was no calculation. A stout, forty-year-old woman in a kimono embroidered with dragons sat before me; she was bored, and a deep pucker had marked itself in her heavy chin.

I talked to her about Mitya, who had been in Moscow not long before and spent a few days with us. She listened and sighed.

"Did he bring his book?"

"Yes."

"That must be the one he began when I was with him.

The thing wouldn't go then; and now it's finished. I'm very happy! I wish him well."

"Do you, indeed," I thought. "Do you, indeed."

"How is he looking? Has he gone grey?"

"A little."

"Not married again, is he?"

"No."

"How's that?"

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Do you think I'm pleased that he hasn't re-married yet?" said Glafira Sergeyevna, looking away. "Not at all. Perhaps I'm not so much to blame as it may seem. He demanded little of me, and I need to have a lot demanded of me." She was silent; then she looked at the clock and something wary and secret flashed in her eyes. "Time to wake up Valentin Sergeyevich," she said, smiling wryly.

She went to the door and turned.

"When you write to Mitya, send him my regards."

I nodded and thought, "I won't!"

* * *

Kramov had evidently decided that I must have come on Institute business. What else, indeed, could have brought me to see him in these busy days, when the Institute was getting ready for a theoretical discussion in which, as he knew, battle was to be given to his school? From his first words I understood that he looked on me as a representative of those "anti-Kramov" forces which had rapidly grouped themselves around Rubakin and the Party Committee. "Why have you come here? To find out how I intend to behave in the discussion? To discover what I think about what they said about me at the Party Committee?"—that was what I read in his glance, in the faint smile which passed swiftly across his face, which then at once became gravely indifferent.

Somehow I found it difficult to say straight out that I'd called to ask about an old manuscript which had not the slightest connection with what was happening at the Institute, and my silence was obviously seen as a subtle tactic on my part.

"How nice that you've come to see me. I'm sorry you've had to wait," said Kramov. "At the Institute we fight, and to stop fighting and think about each other for a moment.... Well! There's no time. Look at me, for instance; I've wanted for some time to tell you how deeply sorry I am about this ridiculous business of Merzlyakov's thesis.... I know you believe that they failed him, as the saying is, of malice afore-thought and that this was done with the blessing—let's be frank—of your humble servant. Isn't that so?"

He paused. Did he expect me to start assuring him to the contrary?

"But do you know what were the real facts about this rejection? It's a simple matter, and to understand it one doesn't need to study the physico-chemical theory of immunity. They envy him, envy him passionately! You will ask me why they should envy a youngster who asks for nothing, who gets in nobody's way, who isn't striving for a high position and who in general is deeply and exclusively busy with scientific research alone? That's just what they envy."

There was a grain of truth in what he said, but only a grain.

"Merzlyakov's a talented fellow. Already now, at the age of 26, he knows and understands more in science than some honoured scientists about whom people remember only that forty years ago they read a brilliant paper at a Pirogov Congress."

This was an allusion to Diligentov; a very significant one if it be remembered that Diligentov, whose weight as a scientist was infinitesimal, was considered, nevertheless, as one of the prominent supporters of the Kramov trend.

"And there's no need to go far for examples. I myself envied him at the defence. Youth, single-mindedness, and along with it such a deep, mature love for his work. Of course, that feeling wasn't strong enough to make me blackball him." Kramov laughed, quietly but from the heart. "Certain of our colleagues, however, as erudite as they are untalented, revenged themselves that day on a poor young man for his talent. You can believe me!"

Again an allusion, this time to Dogadov. I went on mentally commenting on everything he said, like a chess player who has studied his opponent in more than one game, and accompanies each of his moves with the idea which explains it.

"Anyway, we can't allow Merzlyakov to suffer from this manifest injustice. I've phoned Lazarev. . . ."

Lazarev was the head of the post-graduate studies department of the Public Health Commissariat.

"He thinks that it wouldn't be a good idea to repeat the examination at our Institute, but that it could be done somewhere in the provinces. . . ."

"That won't be necessary, Valentin Sergeyevich. Nikolsky has offered Merzlyakov the chance to defend his thesis at an Institute of the Academy of Sciences. Provided the Higher Degrees Commission gives permission for a second examination, of course."

"And after that he'll return to our Institute?"

"I don't know."

"I'll be sorry if he doesn't." He was silent, then looked at me with a smile. "Ah, Tatyana Petrovna, people talk about the Kramov school. Yet, you know, with no less justification your laboratory could be called a scientific school. You have a clear view on things, Tatyana Petrovna. You yourself don't realize that your group has already put out on to the broad road of science. Your laboratory, in fact, has already become almost an independent institute, the only institute in the Union studying curative substances derived from microbes and tissues."

Kramov must have got tangled up in his own calculations to make this crude move, unusual for him. He evidently felt this himself. His cheeks flushed. He took off his pince-nez and wiped them nervously. But it was obviously too late to retreat now.

"A little organizational boldness, eh? Why, indeed, shouldn't such a transformation be carried out?"

I don't know how to convey this sensation, but for the first time in any conversation I'd ever had with Kramov I felt myself more confident, calmer and stronger than he was. I laughed, said, "You're joking," and the moment when he was awaiting my reply, a little worried, passed off.

"Valentin Sergeyevich, I've come to see you about a matter which may seem strange to you. One day you showed me your collection of old medical manuscripts and books."

"I remember."

His reply did not come at once.

"Wasn't there amongst them a manuscript by Dr. Lebedev on 'Protective Forces'?"

Now came his turn to seek a hidden meaning in my words. He raised his eyebrows, and his eyes glanced over his pince-nez with guarded perplexity.

"Quite probably. And why are you interested in this manuscript, Tatyana Petrovna?"

"For a simple reason. It was written by a man who was very dear to me. An old provincial doctor.... Once upon a time I studied under him. But it's of interest to me also as a scientific work. I'm judging only from my childish memories, of course."

Kramov listened, his head politely inclined to one side. He didn't trust me. ("But if this is only a pretext, why does she digress in the middle of a serious conversation? I hinted that I was ready to sacrifice a number of colleagues, yet she didn't take the hint. Why is she passing by the question of Merzlyakov? Can she really have come to me with the single aim of looking at some useless old manuscript by some old doctor?")

I had no doubt that I'd read his thoughts correctly.

"I'll have a look straight away, Tatyana Petrovna," he said calmly. "There isn't a catalogue. I've never got around to compiling one, but I remember something like that.... What did you call it?"

He went into his study—we were talking in the dining-room—and when he came back he said:

"Yes, it is there."

"It is?" I said with joy. "Valentin Sergeyevich, please, I beg you, let me take it away, if only for a few days. Most probably you won't want to part with it for good. As I was on my way here I was thinking about that. But perhaps...."

He still didn't trust me. ("And what if it's a trap?")

"Why shouldn't I part with it? True, like all collectors, I don't much like letting anything out of my hands. But this is a special case. One might, for instance, make a copy of it. Do you want it?"

"Oh yes, please."

"The only trouble is that I sent it to the binder, along with some other manuscripts. But that was two months ago."

He phoned the binder in my presence and, having learnt that the manuscript was ready, promised to send it to me in a day or two.

## THE CONTROVERSY

The conference-hall was full. People were sitting on window-sills and in passages. The doors were open and the corridors were full.

"...Without a theory to start from it's not possible to carry out an organizational conquest, that's the essence of the question. The Kramov theory has arisen before our eyes, but not because it's a living theory, meeting the requirements of science. No, this theory has been selected, put together, thought up. It relies upon facts, yes, but only in one aspect and that, perhaps, the least important one. It has been forged like a weapon, but a weapon not of science, not for getting to know nature better, but for private advantage and glory...."

Uproar. With an expression which portended nothing pleasant, Rubakin silently waited till the noise died down.

"You might say, comrades, that I'm generalizing without any basis. But let's approach the Kramov theory as a social phenomenon and you'll see which of us is right. It didn't fall from heaven. You have only to glance through Valentin Sergeyevich's works, in particular his *Studies in Infection*, and it becomes clear at once that what underlies them is the substitution for the living organism of a system of physico-chemical reactions, with this system considered in isolation from the entire organism as a whole.

"If we examine the road which Valentin Sergeyevich's theory has travelled over the last twenty years, we can boldly assert that it is a road which runs at a tangent to Mechnikov's conception of the nature of immunity. Definite statements have always been scarce where Valentin Sergeyevich is concerned, and in order to create a theory or, more exactly, to gather one around him, he had to spend no little time and trouble. However, he didn't do this. This was done by his school!"

It was close. The previous day the *Vechernaya Moskva* had forecast 73 degrees in the shade, but it had been mistaken: it was about 86. I looked at Lena with some anxiety: she sometimes got ill when the weather was close. Yes, she had gone very pale and her lips were bluish. She winked one eye knowingly and smiled with an effort. Rubakin was at the rostrum. Kramov was at the Presidium table, two paces away from him, and I caught myself thinking that to throw this insulting phrase about "gathering a theory around him" straight in Kramov's face would have been beyond me. Rubakin, however, apparently did not find it hard to do.

"We know what a genuine scientific school is like. Take, for example, the school of Pavlov, who not only examined every work produced by every one of his pupils, but sometimes knew it better than the author himself. Pavlov was irreconcilable, a man of principle in defending his views, and at the same time able to renounce his ideas if experiments and facts did not confirm them. He directed the scientific life of his team with an iron hand, after setting before them a unified, well-thought-out and majestic task to perform. He boldly swept aside everything extraneous, without trying to gather every trifle under the roof of his theory, without striving artificially to combine facts between which there was no internal connection. I ask you, comrades, is the so-called Kramov school like that? During the last few years I've carefully read through the works of many microbiologists, immunologists and virusologists belonging to this trend. It amounts to very little—that's what leaps to the eye. Very little indeed! There are among them a few serious scientists who sincerely believe that the Kramov theory is advancing Soviet medicine—but that doesn't constitute a school. There are some smart persons who find it profitable to belong to a definite trend in science, who shuffle facts and receive degrees and honours for doing it. That's still not a school! There's the method of 'mutual propagation'; the theory gathers supporters under its banner and the supporters obtain facts to support the theory. This is not a school, either! And yet this so-called school exists, does things, extols itself! Wherever we look—in Rostov, Saratov, Kiev, Kazan; I don't even mention Moscow, where it tries to assert its importance on commissions and committees, in editorial boards and research councils. Not the depth but the breadth of the problems embraced is what supports the authority of the leader of this school. Magic—that's it; I can't use any other word. The magic of an influential name, repeated in the press a thousand times, over many years; for all this has been going on for years. Then, suddenly, some young lad, a post-graduate student who hasn't a single published work to his name, dares to lay hands on the infallible theory. . . ."

Uproar. The chairman, Professor Diligentov, agitated, red patches on his cheeks, his grey beard straggling, taps a glass with his pencil. Grasping the rostrum with both hands, gazing fixedly before him, Rubakin waits for the noise to subside.

"...Already at the Rostov Conference Academician Nikolsky warned Professor Kramov's pupils that it would be impossible for immunology to advance until the congealed formulae of the physico-chemical theory had been cast aside. Two generations, the oldest and the youngest, have stretched out their hands to each other. A terrible handshake for you, Valentin Sergeyevich!"

* * *

For the tenth time I perused the piece of paper on which I had written the heads of my speech, and they struck me as thin, colourless, dry. Oh well, never mind! I'd say what I thought.

And, folding the paper in two, I turned round and looked at the silent, attentive, troubled hall. Where was Victor? There he was, sitting in the third row, next to Katya Dimant—on the edge of his chair and, eyes wide open, listening to Rubakin with surprise and delight.

Kolomnin was sitting next to him, his legs crossed, hunched up, his narrow shoulders lifted. What was he thinking about, that odd man? He was narrowing his eyes and ironically turning down the corners of his thin mouth: evidently, he was pleased.

"And what are you thinking, my dear friend?" I mentally demanded of Krupensky, on whose thin, flushed face one expression rapidly succeeded another, indignation giving way to disdain, and affected calm to horror at sacrilege. "Are you frankly ready to wring your daring adversary's neck, or are you plotting a far-seeing plan of evasion, encirclement, and flank attack? Or (who knows?) are you fighting off the fear that, without rhyme or reason, the theory of your teacher and protector and chief will crash down and bury you under its ruins, so that within a year people will recall with difficulty your empty, hollow, jarring name?"

I glanced at Lena, and guessed that she was listening to Rubakin and feeling as if she didn't recognize him, the way one does see a person very near to one when he mounts the rostrum and becomes the centre of general interest.

* * *

There was a stir at the door, people were making way for somebody. Litvinenko, Secretary of the District Party Committee, a handsome man with fluffy "Chapayev" moustaches, came in with a cautious air, biting his lip (he was late!), made his way between the rows of seats, and sat down next to me. In a whisper he asked me to tell him what Rubakin had said:

"In two words!"

I wrote these "two words" on the back of my notes for my speech and showed them to him.

"Are you going to speak, Tatyana Petrovna?"

"Yes. Are you?"

"I don't think so."

* * *

With difficulty picking his way through interjections the chairman called upon Professor Krupensky, who began his address with an analysis of the conception "organizational conquest."

"What did Comrade Rubakin have in mind when he used this imperialistic term? Involved intrigues, calculated manoeuvres, diplomatic tricks? A striving to stand at the head of the vast expanse of Soviet science? Or the fact that Valentin Sergeyevich works simultaneously in three or even, terrible to relate, in four places? Yes, he heads the department of microbiology in the Second Medical Institute, where young people learn to render genuine service to our Soviet country, to Soviet science! Do you call that organizational conquest, Comrade Rubakin? He stands at the head of one of the biggest departments of the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine, which is boldly solving some of the greatest problems connected with the building of socialism. Do you call that organizational conquest, Comrade Rubakin?"

Litvinenko was sitting with his elbows on the table and I could see how with his right hand he was inconspicuously grasping first one finger, then a second, then a third, of his left hand. Krupensky was passing to the fruitful work carried on by Valentin Sergeyevich on the editorial board of the *Journal of Microbiology, Epidemiology and Immunology*—and Litvinenko grasped a fourth finger.

* * *

Andrei had advised me not to write out my speech but to speak from notes, and as I walked to the rostrum I had a moment of keen regret that I had taken his advice. The first heading of my notes read: "Impossible to study immunity outside conformity with general biological law"; much needed to be said so that these words might put on flesh and blood and be transformed into a well-founded statement. How much easier it was to prove this point to oneself than at this rostrum, near which sat a small, straight, very quiet man dressed in an immaculate suit and wearing a starched collar over which hung clean-shaven, supercilious cheeks!

"Nobody since Mechnikov has tried to grasp the problem of non-susceptibility as a whole.... Is the Kramov theory capable of filling the gaps which he left for future Russian scientists to fill? No, it is not capable of doing this."

I paused. I had lost track of my thoughts. Had everything been said? Yes, apparently. Glancing at my notes, I passed on to the next point.

"Professor Dogadov is proud that many articles issuing from within the walls of our Institute have been published abroad. For one's scientific merits to be recognized (this idea kept recurring throughout his speech) one must have published at least one work in a foreign journal. But as to whether Soviet scientists value his work, that, apparently, is a matter of indifference to him. That is presumably not only his attitude but Valentin Sergeyevich's as well, otherwise his recent articles would not have avoided our journals. As we all know, they are not available in Russian. This hardly testifies to respect for Russian, Soviet science!"

At this point I had intended to mention the fact that it was Kramov himself who had struck out of our laboratory's plan of work the problem of mould, though Russian scientists had known at the end of the last century that mould fungus reduces the growth of disease-forming microbes. When I had consulted Rubakin the day before, however, he had said that, as I had not so far succeeded in throwing a bridge between mould and the "protective forces" of the organism I should not bring this question up in the discussion.

"Young cadres" was my next point.

"Why did the staff of the Institute react so sharply to the decision taken on Merzlyakov's thesis? Because this business revealed distrust of our young people. Who, if not Merzlyakov, belongs to our young generation of scientists? Who, if not people like him, comes to the lab with avid curiosity and with impatience immediately to solve the eternal riddles of nature?"

Krupensky leapt to his feet in fury. Uproar. The chairman muttered something about "personal attacks." I promised him that there would be no further personal attacks.

"Valentin Sergeyevich often talks about the great assistance he is giving to young scientists. But when we look at it in terms of deeds, not words, what form does this assistance actually take? Doesn't it amount to this, that in front of the name of the budding scientist there usually appears the name of his chief? I know that sometimes our young people themselves ask him permission for this. Editors print articles more willingly if alongside the unknown name of some post-graduate student stands the famous name of a Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences, an honorary member of many learned societies, Russian and foreign. But doesn't it follow from this that we ought to raise the question of how our editors work, especially the editors of the *J.M.E.I.*, a member of the board of which is Valentin Sergeyevich himself?"

Here was the last point, and I was very glad that it was the last, because the meeting had been going on for a good two and a half hours, and by now not only Lena but the whole tightly-packed little roomful of people were gasping with the heat.

". . . And it would not be so bad if this attitude of detachment from what the country is living through, this scholasticism screened by fine phrases, only affected the Kramov school. The heart of the matter is that the shadow of this scholasticism has fallen over the work of the entire Institute. At congresses, at conferences, and in the Commissariat of Public Health, Valentin Sergeyevich brilliantly proves that our plan is closely connected with the tasks of the Third Five-Year Plan. All the necessary words in this connection are uttered, so distinctly as to leave not the slightest doubt that he deeply understands the importance of our science in relation to the socialist offensive upon nature. Why, then, has not one work of clinical importance come out of Valentin Sergeyevich's own laboratory over so many years? Why does he strike out of the plans of other laboratories subjects which are connected with clinical work?"

"Strike out?" Kramov broke in, in a tone of amazement.

"Yes; here's an example. We succeeded in showing that ordinary green mould delays the growth of certain suppurative microbes. It's hard to say what might have come of this work, but the possibility of applying it clinically had already begun to emerge—it was only approximate but it deserved attention. Valentin Sergeyevich struck this subject out of our plan."

As I spoke, every word that I uttered convinced me more that Rubakin had been right. After the theoretical charges this new, "private" charge of mine seemed unconvincing and inappropriate. It was not hard to guess this from the stir of disappointment and dubiety that instantly ran through the noisy hall.

The chairman tapped his pencil against his glass. I concluded. The applause was half-hearted.

Meeting adjourned.

* * *

After the adjournment, the heated, noisy, furious controversy broke out again with renewed vigour. Some spoke sincerely and others insincerely, some with calculation and others without, some straightforwardly and others hypocritically. Some said what they thought, others did not think what they said. Some defended Kramov, from fear of his influential name, position, and importance. Others defended Soviet science against him, disregarding his titles and his position.

The heat became more and more stifling; the air, both in the room and outside the windows, was motionless. The smoke of a single cigarette, lit by Kolomnin in defiance of the prohibition, floated lengthily and slowly up to the Presidium table, in a band of greyish blue.

Men took off their jackets, women fanned themselves with their handkerchiefs. But hardly anybody left the hall. They were waiting for Kramov to speak.

He took the floor at last. Unhurriedly he approached the rostrum and it was impossible not to marvel at the confidence with which he began his soothing, cautious speech.

"I am not, alas, of the opinion that our discussion here today will decide those questions before which world immunology has been brought to a standstill, with a feeling of some perplexity and even of fear...."

He spoke weightily, coolly, not trying to justify himself or to attack anybody else, with all the freedom from bias of a true scientist. Why was it that behind those sparing gestures, that irrefutable logic, those coldly glittering pince-nez, I sensed a gambler who had struck a patch of bad luck and was now staking much, if not everything, on a known card?

"...Never and nowhere have I proclaimed the formation of a personal school. If this conception has nevertheless been put forward in our scientific publications, that has happened not as a result of any deliberate intention on my part but because, in my books and articles, I have consistently developed my views. As regards people who were interested in having a 'trademark' in order to secure recognition for their work, I ask, comrades, is it just to hold me responsible for that?"

A pause. He is worried. He drinks some water.

"It is with a feeling of bitterness and anger that I repudiate these terrible charges of showing disrespect to our science. It is true that I have objected to a persistent endeavour to avoid problems which stand at the centre of world immunology. I have not agreed to the narrow practicalism which sometimes presents itself as recognition of the close link between industry and science. But to assert that I have trampled underfoot the sacred banner of Russian and Soviet science, the banner beneath which it, together with the entire country, is building the majestic edifice of socialism—that is a downright, unjust lie!"

He is worried. He again drinks some water.

"Among the speakers who have maintained this accusation, which I call without exaggeration a slanderous one, I wish to single out Tatyana Petrovna Vlasenkova, who reproached me with making a deliberate attempt to divert her laboratory from the vital requirements of life. 'Professor Kramov,' she declared, 'struck out of our plan a subject which was of indisputable practical importance.' Yes, I struck it out. And so would any microbiologist have done in my place, if he had a serious attitude to his work.

"It must be observed that Tatyana Petrovna has repeatedly returned to the problem of mould, which seems to her a reliable specific against the most severe diseases. I confess that I was puzzled about this. Where did she get this strange idea? The solution turned out to be a simple one. Over a number of years I have been assembling a collection of old medical books and manuscripts. Tatyana Petrovna recently came to see me with the question whether there was not among my collection the manuscript of a certain Dr. Lebedev, who was dear to her from childhood memories. I found the manuscript; incidentally, in the section devoted to the curiosities and delusions with which, as everyone knows, the history of science teems. I glanced through it, and the source of Tatyana Petrovna's scientific inspiration was revealed to me. A mystical belief in mould permeates this manuscript from the first page to the last. There was a time when the alchemists of the Middle Ages claimed to be able to rear a living *homunculus* in a retort, from rags, dung, and rotten flour. Dr. Lebedev did not come far short of making such a claim. 'Mould,' he affirmed, just as Tatyana Petrovna does, 'kills microbes.' But even toilet soap kills microbes!"

Litvinenko was whispering something in my ear, but though I listened I didn't understand a word he said.

"Can one justify in the case of a Soviet scientist, a doctor of medical sciences, what can be pardoned when it comes from a semi-lunatic quack, a writer of anti-scientific gibberish? I don't think one can; and I don't think it becomes Tatyana Petrovna to criticize me for having frankly tried to warn her against obvious error. Tomorrow, Tatyana Petrovna, I will send you this manuscript; and I shall be very glad if the subject which you share with its author does not bring you bitter and, indeed, fully justified disappointment."

I passed a note to the chairman, asking to speak. He shook his head. The discussion was closed.

"Only two words more," said Kramov. "The last thing I want is for you, my comrades, with whom I have toiled side by side through long years, to think that I blindly repudiate all the criticisms, I have had to hear from you today. You are right on many points, and especially when you say that I do little scientific work and what I do isn't satisfactory.

More and more rarely do I look into my laboratory, as more and more of my time is taken up with administrative questions, which are after all remote from science itself. It's time to recognize, at last, that I have practically given up biochemistry, in which I think, however, that I may still be able to accomplish something, not for myself, of course, but for the cause of Soviet science. That's why I have decided to ask the People's Commissar of Public Health to release me from all my duties, leaving me only my personal laboratory in the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine, to which I intend to devote all my energy."

* * *

Nowadays, when creative discussions have been held in a great variety of fields of science, when controversial questions of philosophy, biology, physiology, and linguistics have been publicly examined and investigated, with the whole country taking part and following them closely, our little intra-Institute discussion appears to me incoherent and superficial. In fact it occurred as a first review of forces, and a keen mind could tell, in summing up this review, that the struggle would not be an easy one, that it would go on a long time, would be one of those which go on for years. Incidentally, it soon became clear that Valentin Sergeyevich's triumphant "resignation" was a considered gesture which allowed him to retain almost all his appointments and titles. He dropped only our Institute.

The Kramov theory, too, escaped decisive defeat; it was routed only some years later.

And yet our little discussion defined the outlines of future battles; that was why, in spite of its incoherence and indefiniteness, it was important and its keenness was remembered. It was not only a questionable theory that our Institute team were then attacking. We were faced with a combination of phenomena which naturally went together; a supercilious attitude to the traditions of Russian science, along with complete failure to understand that the future belongs to the young people. The leader was inadequate as a creator and strove "to grasp with his hands where his head couldn't reach," as Litvinenko neatly expressed it. But nothing convinced me, perhaps, to such a degree as the reading of Pavel Petrovich's work, which Kramov in his speech had made out to be the crazy fabrication of an old man in his dotage.

Kramov duly carried out his promise and sent me, the day after the discussion, Pavel Petrovich's manuscript. "Protective Forces" was neatly inscribed in an old man's handwriting on the first page. "Volume I. Microbes and Tissues."

With the strangest feeling of returning to a past which had seemed gone for ever, I turned over this manuscript, with which so much of my life had been connected. Pavel Petrovich appeared before my eyes just as when he was alive, under the blossoming chestnut-tree, pink from the setting sun. Then, when he had finished his lecture, he went back to his house; I went with him, and what a wonderful world opened before me as I stood on the threshold of that room of many mysteries!

And I recalled another thing: our last talk together, when I was sick at heart because I couldn't help him or comfort him, but he spoke and thought not about himself but about the destinies of Russian science. An opened envelope lay on the table—an opinion on an article which he had sent to the famous R.—a cold, crudely ironical, annihilating opinion. But it was not despair because he was not recognized that had led him to think, at that moment, perhaps the saddest in his life: "Two opposing laws are struggling against each other in the world," he had said then. "The law of death, which every day thinks up new methods of killing and destroying, and the law of peace and life, which strives to free man from the calamities that beset him. And I'm happy because I see the stand Russia has taken in this conflict."

## Chapter VII

# LIGHT AND SHADE

### THE WORK

A few months passed, and fresh air rushed in through the opened windows and doors of our Institute. Our plans were changed; young people noisily burst in through the doors of the laboratories. In ours a new colleague appeared, named Fyodor Andreyevich Rakita. "He's handy and brainy," Lavrov had said of him—Fyodor had taken his master's degree under Lavrov at the First Medical Institute. We should see what Rakita was like; perhaps this slow-moving young man with the quiet voice and open face really had Lavrov's golden hands.

Rubakin was appointed director, and our "high-theory" Institute turned towards what was happening in practical medicine and industrial microbiology. And a lot was happening. Mechnikov's idea of the antagonism between microbes was being developed further and new drugs were being obtained from soil bacteria. A complete revolution had been brought about in the microbiology of water, and each new reservoir presented itself to scientists as a huge field for experiment. The invisible and inaudible work of the useful microbes was accorded growing importance in the country's economy. With increasing effect upon production they were at work in the food industry—in canning, leavening, brewing, milling, baking, dairying. They were serving

Soviet man in tanning, in oil and textile production. With ever greater success they were battling against pests in agriculture.

What place would the new, "non-Kramovite" Institute of Biochemistry of Microbes occupy in the mighty work of Soviet bacteriology?

* * *

They had summoned me to attend the District Party Committee at five o'clock, but I left the Institute at four. That day the work wouldn't go right, anyway, and it would do me good to go for a little walk along the Leningrad Highway and think. About what? About many things. I'd been more than once to see Litvinenko, the Secretary of the District Party Committee, about Institute affairs. But Institute affairs were one thing, and a talk which would end in his giving me a Party card was quite another thing. I was excited; I tried to calm myself, and felt a solemn, joyful feeling rising in my heart.

The day was a good one. The sky, which nobody in Moscow looks at during the winter, had cleared and become bright, and already one could not fail to notice it. Icicles sparkled, and the drops which rolled off them fell with an unusually loud noise around the little mounds of ice growing beneath the drain-pipes. It was spring! As I walked it seemed that through the usual hubbub of the city another sound was distantly making itself heard, as though a young forest, after quivering and bending under strong gusts of wind, was slowly straightening up, disentangling its boughs with a rustling sound.

. . . I remembered my childhood in our low-ceilinged little room in the house of "Valuyev, life-freeman of the city," and how on dark winter evenings I had run all through the town to the "public dining-rooms" and how Almazov, my employer, had once forced me to spend half a day on my knees because of a speck on a table-knife. Yes, my life had begun unhappily. A narrow, philistine world had surrounded me from my first days of conscious existence, and who knows whether I would ever have been able to break out of that close world if it had not been swept away by the revolutionary storm? My father was a kind-hearted man, but muddled and petty, and my childhood years were poisoned by an agonizing feeling of disrespect for him. I grew up in a broken home, and this break would undoubtedly have affected me.... Mother was thirty-eight when she died, and yet she had seemed to me an old woman; indeed, she was an old woman, with bitter wrinkles around her mouth. She used to wake me up at night: "Tanechka, thread the needle for me, my eyes are watering a bit again." And for a long time afterwards I couldn't sleep for trying to understand why Mother had to torment herself like this every night while others lived wealthily and did as they pleased.

And I thought about something else as I strolled along the Leningrad Highway, along the far-stretching avenues now beginning to darken with spring leaves. Had there been bright and happy moments in my childhood? Yes, there had. On my road through life I had met the old doctor, and he had revealed to me for the first time the spacious, shining horizon of another world. But what could I have done with these fine feelings, with this lively interest in nature which was quickening in me, if I had gone on sitting in the basement of Valuyev's factory, sorting filthy rags?

...It happened very simply, much more simply than I had expected. For ten minutes or so we talked about my latest work. Then Litvinenko stroked his moustache and after a moment looked at me with a smile.

"Well now, Tatyana Petrovna," he said, taking a Party card from a box on the table and laying it before me. "I'm sure you won't lower the lofty name of member of the Party. All the rest will come to you, because you're an able person."

He extended his hand to me, I grasped it firmly, and went out.

Nothing had changed, it seemed, during those few minutes which I had spent at the District Committee office. The cars bowled, as before, along the Leningrad Highway, reflections from the sun gliding from their enamelled wings and flying in a trice across the road. As before, the drops of water tinkled as they fell from the roofs and struck the glittering heaps of ice. But it seemed to me that the distant, joyous sound of spring had become more audible, as though it were now no longer only beyond the city, out in the forests and fields, but that in every house, in every street they were talking of that feeling of joy, tenderness, and excitement which filled my heart.

* * *

Andrei had gone down with malaria on his last trip, so that I had to send him to hospital, where the doctors further discovered that his recurrent typhus had by no means disappeared without leaving a trace. He wandered about the ward gloomy and preoccupied, and it seemed as if something else besides the physical depression connected with his illness were dragging him down, some mental anxiety or worry. During the last few years, moreover, I had come to the conclusion that, besides the open side of his life, which he loved to share with me, there was another, "hidden" side which I was not supposed to know.

A week passed and he insisted that they discharge him from hospital. But he still did not go back to work, and it was strange to see him at home, in daylight hours, playing with Pavlik on the floor: with the aid of my scarf a "Metro" had been constructed under the desk, a fine, dark tunnel. I had always been glad to see them together—it happened so seldom! But now, I didn't know myself why, every time I saw them, my heart contracted. A look of helplessness would suddenly pass across his face, which was pinched and very pale, with two deep wrinkles at the mouth which I hadn't noticed before. He made me think of a mighty warrior whose weapon has been struck from his grasp, and who gazes in confusion at his empty, feeble hands.

Andrei and I read Pavel Petrovich's manuscript together. I was glad that this difficult work brightened his forced idleness. We had to join up the broken chapters, collate the repetitions, line by line, word by word, to sort out the carelessly scattered pages. Immediately following the record of an experiment came the drafts for his letter to Vladimir Ilyich. The programme for the Institute of the Protective Forces of Nature was scattered all through the book. The style of the writing itself was also difficult. After an idea expressed briefly and precisely would come diffuse dreams about the future of science and about the future of mankind, which would seem old-fashioned and strange in a modern scientific publication. It was as in Tsiolkovsky's books, alongside the columns of most exact calculations there arose fantastic imaginary buildings erected by the scientist's dreams.

I recognized a few pages as friends recognize each other after a long separation. There was one which, as Pavel Petrovich had dictated it to me, I had fidgeted and wriggled over, striving against my desire to spell "toxin" with an "a" because this word always made me think of a dachshund.* Could I then have imagined that after the passage of many years, as I re-read these childish, crooked lines, sometimes leaning to one side, sometimes flying upward, I should be carefully re-establishing the thread which led from one idea to another?

The reading went slowly. I had little time, and Andrei was suffering from fits of weakness which from time to time obliged him to stay in bed for a whole day. Then Victor began to help us; he had successfully defended his thesis at Nikolsky's Institute and then returned, after Kramov's departure, to ours. Then Lena and Katya Dimant joined us, and gradually the whole team began to busy themselves with this difficult work.

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* In Russian, *taksa*.

The book was certainly not permeated with any mystical belief in mould; that must have been obvious to anyone who had read and not carelessly glanced through it. But the idea of the curative properties of mould certainly did occupy a notable place in it. On what was this based? On experiments which Pavel Petrovich described in detail in his book. "Notwithstanding the error of many years standing," he wrote, "green mould does not cause the slightest harm to man. But it acts destructively upon microbes of suppuration and, consequently, serves as a curative means."

Microbes of suppuration! After testing the influence of mould upon agents of a variety of diseases, we had become convinced that mould inhibited the growth of pus-forming microbes. But what form of mould had Pavel Petrovich used in his experiments?

An indistinct memory flashed in my mind as I read this page. I remembered how I told the old doctor that Zina Nikolayeva in our class had a huge boil on her leg that wouldn't heal; he had treated it, at first unsuccessfully, but then he had sprinkled some greenish powder on the boil and Zina had got better in a few days. The postman's fingers had been abscessed for three months; Pavel Petrovich had sprinkled them with the same powder, carefully ground in a porcelain mortar, and the boils had gone away. Wasn't this green mould?

I put this question before our laboratory team; and mouldy crusts of bread and bits of cheese again appeared on our tables.

* * *

It is well known nowadays that at the beginning of the 1870's Russian scientists had already carried out experiments on the use of green mould in scientific-clinical conditions. Did Pavel Petrovich know about this work? Had he read Polotebnov and Manassein's articles, published in the *Army Medical Journal* in 1871 and in the *Medical Herald* in 1872, in which the fact of the absence of bacteria in mouldy nutrient broth was set forth, and data adduced on the healing of festered wounds with the aid of a mixture of mould and almond oil?

I had no doubt that the old doctor was ignorant of these forgotten works, for otherwise the names of Polotebnov and Manassein would most certainly have been mentioned in his careful references to sources. Even if he had known of them, however, this would in no way have detracted from the importance of his own work, which was constructed on deep theoretical foundations. At the centre of his book lay the idea of strengthening the natural protective forces of the organism, an idea which in our day has become one of the driving forces of Soviet microbiology. From this standpoint Pavel Petrovich had examined the problem of the practical application of Mechnikov's "antagonism of microbes," which he proposed to use to annihilate the sources of infection.

Examining the antagonism of microbes, Pavel Petrovich showed that in the process of evolution forms must have developed which could and should be utilized for the defence of man against the diseases which threaten *him*. With extraordinary foresight he proposed to seek those forms not only in animal but also in vegetable tissues. "Finding and intensifying many times the action of these healing forces": he was confident that it was precisely along this path that new and powerful curative media would be discovered.

I can't find a better way of defining the second part of Pavel Petrovich's work, devoted to the practical application of his theory, than as a premonition of the discovery of antibiotics (as nowadays they call substances, obtained from bacterial cells, which prevent the growth and reproduction of microbes). Taking as his point of departure Mechnikov's well-known article *On the Health-Giving Forces of the Organism,* he declared that an organism strives to keep its internal environment constant, and for that very reason is incessantly mobilizing its protective powers. "What are the mechanisms which ensure this constancy?" he had asked. And he had brought into the foreground the ability of mucous membranes to retard the penetration of microbes into the depths of healthy organs and tissues.

Pavel Petrovich's work played no part in the development of Soviet science. Without knowing about this work, our scientists arrived at the idea of natural non-susceptibility as a physiological function of the organism. But if this manuscript had been published at the beginning of the 1920's, even in scattered, unfinished form, not only would it have immortalized its author, placing him among the greatest of Russian scientists, it would have illuminated the work of a whole generation of Soviet microbiologists. But throughout long years it lay in silence, in a void, in the cold house of a cold man.

## FIELD OF VISION

This idea had flashed before me already in those distant, childhood years when I first saw, on the window-sill in Pavel Petrovich's room, the old, cracked glass with mouldy bits of bread in it. Then it had been turned into a fable, and every evening when I went to sleep I went off along with the little girl named Masha to the Surgery-cum-Chemists on Gentle Hill. I imagined myself a doctor who had managed to find a cure for all diseases. I "opened a surgery" and the first patient who came to me was, of course, Pavel Petrovich; I gave him a single grain of miraculous mould and said, "Take it and leave me your stick as a keepsake." I didn't yet understand in those days that in this fable was hidden something very near to the old doctor's work, to the papers written by his hand, to the moist, green slices of bread and cheese which Agnia Petrovna grumblingly threw into her slop-pail when she cleaned his room.

Then this simple and extraordinary idea had gone away and had been reborn. Now it was transformed into an *idée fixe*, when Pavel Petrovich began to assert, with burning eyes, that the time would come when this mould would open a new era in medical science. Now it was hidden in the notes of his lecture, when I was working under Nikolai Vasilyevich on my first paper on diphtheria.

Later, when I was at the State Farm, I tried to clarify what the influence of mould was on the luminosity of vibrios, and I had clarified it, and had learnt not only to regulate the power of the light but also to transfer it from cholera-like vibrios to cholera ones. But was Pavel Petrovich right? That I hadn't discovered.

When I went to the Institute and had mastered the ABC of laboratory work, I had again taken up this question—and had lost my way, getting into a blind alley and becoming confused among contradictory facts. Then for a long time I had forgotten the old and seemingly useless idea. But after a few years, again a mould fungus had appeared under the microscope, looking like a graceful sapling surrounded by a sort of tiny, subtly-outlined, densely-entangled forest. This fungus was studied from a new angle; to its action were subjected agents of the widest variety of diseases. But Kramov had stopped this work as it was developing, saying that it was in no way linked with the study of the protective forces of the organism.

Meanwhile, however, Soviet medicine was swiftly developing, mastering one new field after another. A new laboratory technique came forward to correspond to our theoretical rearmament. Biochemistry approached very close to the study of the natural resistance of tissue. Chemists pondered on the laws by which the dissolution of microbes takes place in nature. So was it impossible that we should succeed in discovering the secret of mould now, when cognate and perhaps much more difficult problems had been solved?

* * *

The work had begun: laborious and slow, on material which we knew well but which was scattered. What kind of mould should we test first? Perhaps the kind which so often annoys us when it appears quite out of turn on nutrient media which for some reason have been left standing about.

Patience—that was what above all we needed to be armed with. Mould fungus grows slowly, taking eight or nine days, and no force exists which can make it reproduce any faster. Week succeeded week and we still could not answer the question which Pavel Petrovich had put to himself, and to us, so many years before. Neither yes nor no!

Then we managed to establish a very weak but indubitable action of mould on certain streptococci. But within a few days these very same streptococci, alive and healthy, were frisking merrily about, paying no heed to the "mouldy" neighbour so close to them. Slowly and patiently we selected from among the numerous varieties of mould those which acted with the greatest power upon suppurative bacteria.

It was patient, everyday, every-hour work, when hope would glow uncertainly from a partly-successful experiment, only for us to realize the following day that of this hope not a trace, alas, remained.

* * *

I always liked to stay on in the laboratory in the evenings, when everything that had been done, discussed or intended during the day would cool down, and the outlines of the main thing would stand out, that main thing which sometimes obliterates the work not only of the past day but of the past month and year. The whole morning had been spent in a heated argument with Kolomnin, and now I had to think whether he might be right and calmly to evaluate all his doubts and objections. I had to return to this argument because in it, I felt, rang the sober voice of a man who was able to grasp at a single glance the whole contemporary technique of biochemistry and to see serious difficulties where a microbiologist had not noticed them.

"You are using concepts taken from general notions about natural protection," he said. "But what is the relation, essentially, of your green mould to the mechanisms of protection?"

Two or three years previously Kramov had put the same question to me in another form, and I hadn't been able to answer. But then I was working at random, whereas now I had new facts, connected together, at my disposal. Let us consider then, what did they tell us?

Ilya Terentyevich, who had remained behind on night duty, called on me and asked if I'd like some tea. I replied that I would; he brought some and stopped to talk about war.

"What do you think, Tatyana Petrovna; will the Germans seize Czechoslovakia and move against the Soviet Union?"

"I don't think so, Ilya Terentyevich."

He stood for a while in silence.

"My son says, 'It's impossible that this storm should pass us by.' "

He sighed and went out.

"And so," I went on thinking. "What do these facts tell us after all? Not only these facts, either. When I was working in the department, under Nikolai Vasilyevich, I reduced the toxicity of the diphtheria microbe with the aid of liver extract. Is there nothing in common between this phenomenon and the action of mould on suppurative bacteria?"

It seemed that the slanting shadows of the trees along the Leningrad Highway had only just melted into the twilight, and already the bright, warm, still quite summery night was upon us. The lamps were lit. The slender crescent of the young moon gleamed and was lost in the clouds. Well now, was there a connection? And suppose there was not the slightest connection between these facts? Well, there wasn't, that's all!

And I began thinking that the following day was a Sunday and all of us from our lab were going to the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition which had opened a few days before but which we had had no time to visit until now, although everybody in Moscow was talking enthusiastically about it. Andrei wanted to leave the sanatorium that day and come with us. He was spending his vacation near Moscow. How worried I was about him! His eyes had changed, they looked heavy and preoccupied, and his gestures were different, as though all the time he was trying instinctively to shift some burden which lay upon him.

We had spent the previous year's leave together near Tarussa and he'd felt so well when he was there. I recalled how a boy had been stung at the apiary and how I had warmly applied myself to proving to Andrei that the toxicity of bees supported the "protection theory." "The very same substances which are toxic for some organisms are completely harmless for others"—that was what my idea amounted to. "The bee is toxic, yet chickens eat bees without suffering the slightest consequences. Vesicatory beetles are dangerous to man but hedgehogs, for example, are completely insensitive to the poison which these beetles secrete. So streptococci, too...."

I began to sharpen my pencil, and broke it.

"Some forms are insensitive to the substance which mould secretes, while others...."

A vague surmise stirred in my mind when, meditating on these words, I quietly repeated them to myself: stirred and escaped me. What was it? A rejected hypothesis, an unimportant yet for some reason remembered detail from one of my old experiments? Who could say?

The glassware tinkled in response to an even rumbling noise borne from afar off. I went to the window. People were standing on the boulevard, hushed, silent, as though worried about something, and were looking in the direction from which came this rolling iron rumbling sound. A tank unit was passing along the highway....

* * *

We gathered at the Institute early in the morning. Andrei phoned to say that the doctor wouldn't let him go to the Exhibition because it was noisy and there were too many people, so we went without him.

Later, during the war, I recalled this happy day more than once, and so did Kolomnin, Victor, and Lena. Perhaps my heart already guessed, deep down, that such good days as this would not soon be repeated.

A double-decker trolley-bus took us to the Exhibition, and for some reason we all went to the top deck, though inside there were far fewer people. All, that is, except Victor, who stayed below. He was not alone but with a girl we didn't know—such a strongly-built, well-made, grey-eyed girl, with such healthy colour in her pleasant face that it was impossible not to wish them happiness—mentally, of course, not aloud. Were there real grounds for our thinking like this? And as we looked out upon Moscow's lively scene flying past us, we men and women of science considered this interesting problem.

. . . I have heard that Gorky had the idea of producing a book in which one ordinary day in the life of our country should be reflected in all its fulness and variety. The Agricultural Exhibition, with its attractive permanent buildings, its magnificent fruits, almost like something out of a dream, and all the wealth of impetuously developing life reflected in it, seemed like that book come to life, relating the very ordinary and at the same time extraordinary doings of the Soviet people.

A little bemused by the noise and the festival colours, we wandered from pavilion to pavilion, never tiring of looking at all that there was to see. Along with us wandered Ukrainians, Uzbeks and Tatars—a host of languages were to be heard amid that joyous, lively crowd! Lena would stop now and then and suddenly appear again, pale and gay, flourishing some roses which she had bought.

"Isn't it fine, Tanechka," she asked me quietly as she took my arm. "How I'd like to wander like this all my life long. I'm only sorry that youth's behind me."

When we came to the "North Caucasus and Crimea" Pavilion I began seeking my own State Farm, and found it in the hall devoted to the Rostov Region, where it had been given a place of honour. Whether my companions wanted to or not, they had to listen to a brief speech by the former medical officer of this State Farm on what it had been like in 1930, and what, according to the numerous charts and photographs, it had become today.

"I remember that you were already working on mould at that time, Tatyana Petrovna," said Kolomnin. "I heard your paper at the 1933 conference. It was you who transferred luminosity from cholera-like vibrios to cholera ones. But what part did mould play in that?"

I wanted to remind him but he gave me no opportunity.

"Ah, yes! When the vibrios were combined with mould, the intensity of the light increased."

"Comrades, I have a proposal," said Lena. "One hour without mould. Who's for? Raise your hands."

"Not simply combined with mould, Ivan Petrovich. That's just it, the mould by itself didn't intensify the luminosity. I used a filtrate."

"What sort of filtrate?"

"Well, now—the luminosity became intensified under the influence of a substance which the mould secreted into the nutrient medium.... Just a minute, Ivan Petrovich, what have I said?"

This was the hypothesis which had flashed and disappeared in my mind the previous night. If the fact that it was not the mould itself which acted on the bacteria, but that unknown substance, then.... Then, this substance must also protect the mould from bacteria. This, then, was the bridge between mould and natural protection. Pavel Petrovich had seen the mould fungus as an organism capable of producing an active means of protection.

"Comrades, apparently I did know what it was!"

We had just stopped before a photograph depicting a sunflower for siloing, as big as two men, and were arguing about how much credence could be placed in this photograph; Victor had proposed that we make some inquiries on the point, and I, defending the honour of our State Farm, had been about to lead the sceptics to the section where crops were being displayed.

Within less than a minute, all this was forgotten. The six of us were talking all at once, frenziedly waving our arms and bumping into each other. There was a stir among the public who were decorously inspecting the pavilion. An exhibition attendant, evidently under the impression that a brawl was about to break out, approached us hastily.

"What was the origin of the yellow colouring on the surface of the nutrient broth? The mould had secreted a substance which coloured the broth. And we've got to study not the mould but this substance, because it's just this that acts on the bacteria which cause suppuration."

* * *

After spending a whole happy, excited day at the Exhibition I returned home. On the stairs I met Agnia Petrovna, running out to the chemist's.

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing's the matter," she replied and waved her hand angrily. "Doctors, professors, but no pyramidon in the house."

"What do we need pyramidon for?"

"For Andrei! He's got a headache."

"Has he come home?"

I hastily mounted the stairs and opened the door—I had my own key. I stopped in the hallway; ahead it was dark both in Pavlik's room and in ours.

"Put the light on, I'm not asleep," said Andrei quietly, as I entered on tiptoe so as not to wake him and began removing my shoes in the darkness.

"What's up? You came home after all?"

He was lying on the bed in his clothes, his arms folded under his head, looking very pale and strained.

"I came home this morning, Malyshev sent for me. It's an urgent matter."

I sat on the bed and touched his forehead with my lips. It was burning.

"You've got a temperature again."

"Perhaps; not a very high one. Well, tell me!"

"Tell you what?"

"You've got some news, I can see that."

He took my hand affectionately.

"All right, I'll tell you now."

He listened in silence, his eyes squinting a little as they always did when he was preoccupied.

"If you manage to obtain this substance in pure form, do you think it could be used against wound infections?"

"Why only against wounds? Against festering in general. Or do you think..."

"No. But who knows what may happen?"

"All right, now you tell me your news. Where are you off to?"

He smiled.

"Why have you decided I'm off somewhere? To Mongolia."

"Why to Mongolia?"

"Well, now you're all in a flutter!"

"But you're ill."

"It's nothing. It'll pass off on the journey."

* * *

War was raging in the Far East. We knew already from Molotov's speech at the Third Session of the Supreme Soviet that Japan had provocatively violated the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. and of the Mongolian People's Republic and that the latter's frontier "we shall defend as resolutely as our own." *Pravda* had published an article devoted to the Fifteenth Anniversary of the Mongolian People's Republic, mentioning that "in the last few weeks, the Soviet troops fighting alongside units of the Mongolian People's Army had shown . . . how weighty was this warning from one of the heads of the Soviet Government."

I was troubled, for the first time in my life, by persistent insomnia. I lay still, my head clear, and thought and thought. . . . I remembered one of my few trips with Andrei, when we visited a little town on the Kama, and Andrei tried to convince me that it was inhabited exclusively by boys and girls between the ages of thirteen and seventeen. And it was true, wherever you looked, such boys and girls were everywhere—cleanly dressed, brisk, carrying books and notebooks tied together with narrow straps. At the baker's shop they, like ourselves, were eating pastries and laughing together. They sat over their books with an earnest air in the park and on the banks of the Kama. It was a shop-assistant at the baker's who explained the mystery to us: a technical school had been opened in the town, and young people had come in from all around to take the entrance examination.

Then it struck me that Andrei was one person at work and quite a different person at home, and that really nobody, apart from myself and his close friends, knew this. At work he was reserved and dry, and his outward appearance, with his straight, fair tuft of hair, his bright eyes, even his nose with the two parallel bones which showed through, the whole of his stern, regular-featured face, emphasized this reserve of his, this distinction of mind, which a person talking to him felt in the first words he spoke. At home he was more expansive, softer, kinder. And I began to feel that I was occupying a bigger place in his life than he in mine, and that this was unfair because he was so much cleverer, kinder and in every way better than I.

I had a pass to Gaspra which I wanted to return, but Rubakin insisted that I go. It was a pity I did. I had always liked Gaspra, with its splendid sanatorium for scientists and its park where I liked even the fact that the paths were strewn with cockle-shells which crunched under my feet. But now it was all disagreeable, everything started to be a burden to me the very day after my arrival; the too beautiful cypresses, the line of hills picturesquely etched against the background of moonlit sky, and the sea with its quivering bands of silver stretching from the shore to the horizon. My room-mate called me a lunatic, and the nurse placed a Bekhterev mixture* every evening on my night-table. But powders and mixtures didn't help me. Newspapers arrived late at the sanatorium and that was a special cause of irritation to me. After spending only a few days at Gaspra, I returned home.

The communiqué about the mopping up of the remnants of the Japanese-Manchoukuo armies in the frontier zone of the Mongolian People's Republic had already appeared in the newspapers. There were lines in the diplomatic news from which it was easy to deduce that an agreement was being prepared, between Japan and the Soviet Union, regarding the events on the River Khalkhin-gol. But Andrei was still out there in the Far East.

On Sunday I went to see Pavlik. We'd taken a room near Moscow at Vnukovo for the summer for him and Agnia Petrovna. For a long time he wouldn't let me go, as though he felt that something lay heavy on my heart. We sat side by side on the bank of a pond or strolled in the woods; he asked a question a minute and at first he was angry with me for answering him absent-mindedly, but then he fell silent, thinking, no doubt, about something of his own. Other six-year-olds already had a sturdy, boyish walk, but he was still a little flabby and I was worried because every now and then he would ask me to stop—he tired very quickly.... Still, he cheered up remarkably when Lena came out to Vnukovo bringing her little neighbour Katya Stogina.

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* Medicine used in treatment of nervous disorders, devised by and named after V. M. Bekhterev, Russian neuropathologist.

The shrill voice of the little girl echoed through the woods, "This one's a nice mushroom, but that one's a toadstool!" And Pavlik would gaze with respect into the round, flushed face of this Katya who knew her way so well in this matter which to him seemed so complicated.

Then came the event of which people in all five continents had been talking with anxiety, concern, and fear—the German armies entered Poland, and the Second World War began. And I began to feel that I, with my sleeplessness and intense preoccupation with what was happening on the frontiers of the Mongolian People's Republic, was behind the times, stuck in a vanished stage of history, and that for me alone a "past" was still going on which everyone around me had completely forgotten.

Andrei came back in November. I couldn't go to meet him because I was down with 'flu, and when he came in, worn out and tired but cheerful, in military uniform, I couldn't bear it, and cried a little.

"I won't let you go away any more. I'll bar your way."

But before two weeks had passed he was packing his trunk again. The war with the White Finns had begun and the newspapers carried the communiqués of the Leningrad Military Area. It was only the day before he was due to go that Malyshev cancelled his posting and instead sent to the Finnish front another member of his staff who had worked in Karelia before.

In January my comrade of Leningrad days, Lyosha Dmitriyev, called on us, and listening to the tales he told I visualized for the first time the blacked-out front-line city, with not a chink of light showing in the heavy masses of buildings merging into each other in the darkness.

He told us how the nearness of the front dominated and governed the life of the city; of the work of the doctors, who were devising new methods against frost-bite; of the startling contrast presented by calm brightly-lit Moscow. As I listened to him I could not control the anxiety that was growing within me and gripping my heart.

We achieved many things all at once as usually happens when a new idea, in an instant lighting up everything that has been done hitherto, draws a sharp line between what has been desired—what the seekers have wanted to see—and the reality, what they actually see.

We had established that the essential thing was not the fungus itself but the active substance which it secreted. We had established that this substance inhibited the growth of the microbes of suppuration with extraordinary, almost fantastic effectiveness. The nutrient broth made from *penicillium crustosum* was diluted a hundred, two hundred, three hundred times... at last six hundred times! Yet the microbes continued to dissolve before our eyes, "transformed into their own shadows." This was Kolomnin's expression; he had become younger and gayer after all these happy months of intense work. Carbolic, one of the strongest of antiseptics, acted on these microbes with only one-thousandth of the effect of nutrient medium derived from *penicillium crustosum.* Only one-thousandth! What was this unfathomable power which was contained in this humble fungus which grew on bread, fruit, vegetables, and dung?

As in a strange town, we discovered something new, that we had never seen before, in every corner. Everything was unusual, aroused our interest, excited and absorbed us. And still we did not know what would meet our eyes when we came to the main street and knew that it really was the main street, and that until then we had been roaming on the outskirts, going up blind alleys and losing ourselves in deserted sidestreets!

Have you ever taken down from the shelf a book which you've forgotten and suddenly found yourself reading it with new eyes? You discover a profound meaning in what before had seemed superficial or accidental. Separate and unconnected features come together to form a picture, and as you look at this picture come to life, you begin to suspect that much has until now remained in shadow.

I remember the last year before the war with this feeling of seeing and not recognizing....

One frosty February day, Pavlik and Andrei and I went to meet the men of the *Sedov* expedition in the square in front of the Byelorussian Railway Terminus. From the beginning of the day broadcasting had been devoted to the heroes. Composers had written songs to them, and poets had written verses. The whole country knew that the Sedovites had made two hundred recordings of the dangerous movement of ice in direct proximity to their icebreaker; and that hardly had the first copies of the *History of the C.P.S.U.(B.)* appeared in Moscow than the Sedovites were taking down the text in sections as they were read over the wireless and making copies on the only typewriter on the icebreaker.

Cars decorated with flowers were speeding along Gorky Street to the Byelorussian Terminus. Delegations from factories, offices, and institutes were bringing flowers, and it was strange and surprising to see hyacinths and stocks on this cold day, with the keen wind and the harsh snowy spray beating into one's face. The flowers had been brought from the south.

Pavlik had not long learnt to count, and was now counting everything—steps, houses, time.... The drift of the *Sedov*, he calculated, had lasted twenty-seven months, or 812 days and 10 hours. These calculations were complex—one part down to the moment when the Sedovites saw through the fog the lights of the icebreaker *Joseph Stalin*, another until the moment when the icebreaker moored alongside the *Sedov* (Pavlik liked to repeat those words). He spoke thoughtfully, with an expression of fixed attention which was noticeable even when I pulled down the ear-pieces of his hat, and you could only see his little nose and his serious, moving lips.

We went to Kolomnin's; he lived in Gorky Street, in the corner house opposite the Byelorussian Terminus, and from the window of the fourth floor we saw the snowy-green square decorated with streamers, portraits, and banners.

After a little, men in black greatcoats appeared in this attractive square, to be greeted with a roar of delight. The Sedovites walked along a red-carpeted path up to the tribune.

It was hard to make out their faces, and one of Kolomnin's neighbours fetched field-glasses. After Pavlik had looked through them I lifted them to my eyes, and the first person I saw was neither the commander of the *Sedov*, nor the commander of the icebreaker *Joseph Stalin*, whose names Kolomnin had just told me. Amid the crowd of people who had gathered to meet them I made out Mitya, as clearly as if he were standing next to me.

I passed the glasses to Andrei.

"Who's that man, do you think? That one over there, d'you see him, the tall one in the short fur-coat."

Andrei looked. Then he said, uncertainly, but with joy in his voice:

"Mitka!"

And from that moment we didn't shift our eyes from the tall man in the short fur-coat, standing beneath the poster which read: "Warm greetings to the conquerors of the ice."

Representatives of the Council of People's Commissars, the Central Committee, and the Moscow Soviet greeted the Sedovites, the band played the *Internationale*, the captain of the icebreaker returned thanks and a schoolgirl handed him a huge bouquet. The meeting was over. Cars with garlands dangling sped away along Gorky Street, people began to disperse and we hastily went down. Kolomnin remained at his observation post, with strict instructions to keep an unrelenting watch on the man who was either Mitya's double, or, if we were not mistaken, Mitya himself.

"It's Mitya, I tell you, it's Mitya!"

"I think it's Mitya, too. But how did he come to turn up here?"

"That's quite simple. He called, didn't find us, and went to meet the Sedovites."

And it really was Mitya. We overtook him outside our home, in the yard of the Institute.

That evening Agnia Petrovna baked a pie in honour of the arrival of her elder son. The brothers argued, as they always did, and as I listened to them I marvelled at the way they grew more like each other with every year that passed. Both carried themselves erect, in military style, both had developed a single furrow between the brows. Both had acquired a scrutinizing, far-seeing, thoughtful look. Both had become thinner with the years.

Their argument was the same one which invariably flared up within the first few hours of every fresh encounter between them.

"When a real research scientist comes to a department, how eagerly the young people gather round him! You don't have to look far for an example. Take Lavrov, when he went to the First Medical Institute. What happened? Within a couple of years his department had become the best in the Soviet Union. Yet he's not one to set rivers on fire. He's a research worker, though, and those who go to learn science from him feel it vividly."

"Why do you think that I haven't succeeded in combining my departmental work with research?"

"I thought. . . ."

"You thought! You were merely afraid that nothing of value for science would ever come from me!"

Mitya spent a few days with us, and on those days, Andrei returning from work at eight, we dined at home and reorganized the whole of our domestic routine so as to spend more time with Mitya. The three of us went to the Moscow Art Theatre, to see a new production of Chekhov's *Three Sisters*; this was a wonderful evening, when everything that happened on the stage seemed somehow linked by a secret thread with Lopakhin, with our youth, with the elms first putting forth green leaves, with memories of that night at the Pustynka when Andrei and I had vowed to "achieve something great in the name of the peopie and for their good."

Then Mitya was gone—very pleased with himself after reading a successful paper at the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine. In earlier days, as soon as we had parted, I used to think sadly that practically nothing had been added with the years to his talent, original and acute as it was. As a child I had been given a kaleidoscope, and I never tired of looking at the vari-coloured symmetrical patterns and combinations, changing in an instant as soon as one turned the tube in which this marvel was contained. Then I accidentally trod on this kaleidoscope, and from the burst cardboard there fell out fragments of perfectly ordinary coloured spectacle-glass, the same that we used to play hopscotch with.... From time to time I detected something unstable, easily-changing about Mitya's too shapely schemes and plans.

But this time when I saw him off it was with quite a different feeling....

## A GREAT DAY

Ninety-three kinds of mould had been studied and tested on microbes of suppuration. And it seemed that of all these fungi it was *penicillium crustosum* that dissolved the microbes with most vigour. These were days when we spoke of it as of a living thing: "It likes, it doesn't want, it prefers," just as though a child had been born in the laboratory. Which nutrient medium did it prefer? At what temperature did it like to grow and at what did it not? How did it tolerate the action of acids, of air, of sunshine, of electric light? It was necessary to "create conditions for it" and with unprecedented zeal we applied ourselves to this enthralling task.

All this and much else related to the study of mould fungus as "the attacking side." What was the over-all picture of the struggle which it carried on with its foes, not on the laboratory table but in nature? Who were its foes? The bacteria of suppuration? Only those? At one time and another we had tested the action of mould on agents of a great variety of diseases, including cholera and tuberculosis. Now we had to renew this "free search"; not blindly, as before, however, but relying on the mighty force concealed within the yellow substance secreted by the fungus *penicillium crustosum.*

We repeated our old experiments and confirmed that the yellow substance had not the slightest effect on the agents of typhoid fever, cholera or tuberculosis. We carried out new experiments and ascertained that it inhibited the growth of diphtheria bacilli, and also of the agents of meningitis, gas gangrene, anthrax or pneumonia.

I have mentioned above that we had dark days and bright days. Now came a continuous series of bright days, so that even Katya Dimant grew bored with boasting of our successes, and only smiled with modest pride when colleagues from neighbouring laboratories asked her how the work was progressing.

But then came a series of dark days, darker than we had known in all the seven years of our work together. The yellow substance from the mould fungus turned out to be sensitive, more than that, super-sensitive, and we remained stuck before this unexpected obstacle for a long time. It decomposed rapidly at ordinary room temperature and even more rapidly at higher temperatures. It lost activity when exposed to sunlight. It could not be concentrated or condensed. We could not refine it. It had become null before we could succeed in accumulating the quantity needed for injections into animals. We had to make it less sensitive, more stable. But how?

"How?" Kolomnin asked himself a hundred times; his efforts had put years on him, he exhausted himself, hardly even by force could he be made to quit the laboratory.

"How?" I asked, reporting on our achievements at the Institute conference in the summer of 1940.

A discovery which could, without exaggeration, be described as important, promising and profound was slipping from our hands, in spite of all our efforts, all our labour in ceaseless, tireless experiment and cogitation, and despite all the up-to-date technique of biochemistry, which to us seemed perfect.

* * *

A wall calendar from which the wind is impetuously tearing pages comes to my mind when I recall the summer of that year. There are so many of these pages, and they flash by with such rapidity that the eye barely succeeds in stopping at a memorable date. 30th of June! The wind drops, the calendar hangs motionless on the wall. The pages fly away like white birds. A little hillock of telegrams grows on the corner of the table. . . .

It was a Sunday morning, and half asleep I heard Agnia Petrovna ask our neighbour Marusya to sit with Pavlik until she came back. Then the telephone rang and Marusya answered somebody, "Thanks, I'll pass it on at once."

"Tatyana Petrovna," she said in a loud whisper from outside the door, "are you asleep? Good morning! Malyshev phoned and asked me to pass on his congratulations."

"And what's he congratulating about? And whom?"

"Why, Andrei Dmitrich; who else? And he said, 'Why couldn't I get through to you? Is everybody phoning congratulations? Pass on mine, please.' "

"Why didn't you ask him anything?"

But Marusya only shrugged her shoulders. I phoned Malyshev but he had already left home.

"Curious, I wonder what he was congratulating me on?" said Andrei as he did his morning exercises. "Ah, I know what it must be. Our plan for sanitary defence has been approved."

We argued for a bit about whether Malyshev would have phoned on a Sunday for such a reason.

"No doubt at all that he would!" said Andrei, with decision.

We had calmed down and were drinking our coffee when the phone rang again.

"Tatyana Petrovna, it's me, Victor! I didn't hear it myself, and the newspapers only go up to 'K,' but Mother heard, she'd just woken up. Congratulations!"

"Thank you, Victor. But what on, exactly?"

"Why, don't you know?"

"No."

"Andrei Dmitrich has been awarded the Order of the Red Star."

"Not really!"

"I don't remember just how it went," he said confusedly. "I didn't hear it myself, but Mother.... She says.... Tatyana Petrovna, I'll find out straight away and ring you again. I have a friend who works on *Vechernaya Moskva*. He knows everything."

And Victor replaced the receiver.

"But I tell you it must be a mistake," said Andrei, blushing with delight, when I congratulated him, without much conviction, and gave him a kiss. "Why should I be awarded the order? I don't believe it at all!"

When Agnia Petrovna came back from the baker's and heard what it was all about, she was afraid that we might be rejoicing for nothing.

"Oh dear, my head's going round and round," she said angrily, sitting down. "Andryushenka, my darling!"

"That's enough, Mother."

I pondered, then phoned Lena.

"Good morning. Did I wake you?"

"Good morning," replied Lena, with a yawn.

We were both silent.

"Well, how's everything?"

"Nothing to tell you. We are still asleep. And you?"

"No. Shall we go to Khimki?"

"Well! Are you out of your wits? How can we go to Khimki when you yourself argued for a full hour only last night that we must hand in our report on the half-year's work not later than Monday?"

"Oh yes, of course. Good-bye."

"No, they haven't decorated my Andrei," I thought, sadly.

And the day took its usual course. Pavlik had been invited out, and I had some difficulty in convincing him that nobody goes visiting in the morning. Andrei busied himself with a chess problem, then suddenly remembering that there was a game of living chess being played that day at the Zis Stadium, between Bukhartsev and Romov, which Moscow chess fans had long been looking forward to, he telephoned to check whether the game was in fact on (the day was a cold one) and to order tickets if so.

He was at the phone for nearly an hour; that was why, whenever people phoned him later the conversation always began with the words, "Why couldn't I get through to you? Is everybody telephoning to congratulate you?"

Victor's friend from *Vechernaya Moskva* confirmed that among those decorated "for valour and courage in the fulfilment of military assignments" the name of Andrei Dmitriyevich Lvov was included—and from then on the telephone rang every minute, so that for convenience I placed the instrument on the decorated comrade's knee.

The first to come was Lena, who rushed in full of excitement, bringing champagne and demanding that it be drunk on the spot. Andrei and I tried to object, but Lena put down our objections, crying that "this is the done thing," so that we were obliged to submit, though until then nobody seemed to have known that things were done just like that. Lena rushed away, promising to come back that evening with Pyotr Nikolayevich.

Telegrams began to arrive, first singly, then in bundles. From the Kramovs, from Mitya, from somebody called Ostretsov—Andrei and I puzzled for a long time over who this Ostretsov could be, until we remembered that it was the name of the old watchman in Anzersk Settlement. From comrades at work, my own and Andrei's. From school friends —Gury Popov, special correspondent of *Izvestia* in the southern Urals, Volodya Lukashevich, captain 3rd rank in the White Sea Flotilla, Nina Bashmakova, singer at the Leningrad Maly Opera Theatre.

The bundles of telegrams on the table went on piling up, so that by the time that Andrei, at last, suddenly bethought himself that Bukhartsev and Romov would not wait for him at the Zis Stadium, and we went out, I was feeling that all the people of Moscow had rushed to the telegraph office as one man in order to wish us health and happiness.

At that time it was not yet possible to reach the Stalin Auto Works by the Metro, that line was still only on paper, and we took a long time getting there by tram, which would have been boring on any other day but this one. The game had already begun when we took our places. Andrei, who had, a moment before, been talking animatedly about something, fell silent and fixed his eyes on the demonstration board. And I rested—we had been running as fast as we could—and looked around me.... From the first glance I was convinced that the "chess world" of which Andrei spoke with such reverence consisted mainly of schoolchildren of the sixth and seventh forms; but it was unthinkable to utter such a blasphemous thought before Andrei who, frowning fearsomely, was pondering whether the chess players had done right in playing some "Indian opening" or other.

Altogether, the spectacle was a strange one. In the midst of a huge field stood a table, at which the chess players sat beneath the open sky. One of our friends had suggested that I take binoculars so as to be able easily to compare the players—on the basis of external, not internal data, of course. Romov sat hunched up, never removing his attentive, intense gaze from the board. Bukhartsev, a slim, fair-haired young man in spectacles, after making his move, was watching with interest but, it seemed to me, not without a certain amount of bewilderment, what was going on around him in the huge field, marked out in squares.

The field was marked out to represent an enormous chessboard on which, as on any other chessboard, chessmen were standing here and there. But these chessmen were alive; that was the whole point of this strange game. A girl holding a tennis racket represented the Queen, and she certainly made an attractive one; the young officers sitting next to us were lost in admiration of her. The Kings, however, were not in the least like Kings; they were healthy young boys who made hardly more than five or six moves all through the game and so, doubtless from boredom, uttered somewhat caustic remarks from time to time to the pawns who stood in front of them.

As Bukhartsev made his move, a black bishop moved diagonally across the demonstration board, while at the same time a live bishop, jumping on a bicycle, darted off to the appointed place. Romov countered with a knight, and a machine-gunner, dragging his weapon after him, slowly moved three squares forward, then turned into a fourth, on his right. On the whole, this was not very amusing; I speak only of my own impressions, of course. As regards Andrei, he was completely uninterested in what was happening in the field, but didn't remove his eyes for a second from the demonstration board.

Bukhartsev, in his view, was not playing one of his best games. As for Romov, his moving the King from D. 1 to D. 2 was a mistake, in that this gave the black the opportunity to move a castle to B. 8 and a bishop to H. 7, and so on and so forth.

As I didn't want to distress Andrei I listened to him with a serious, understanding air. Actually I was much more interested in one of the pawns under Romov's command than in the dangerous situation of Romov himself. The pawns were represented by Young Pioneers who were dressed, as was proper for Pioneers, very lightly, in shirts and shorts. But the weather was cold and it wasn't easy to stand still in one place for long. One of the pawns, a flaxen-haired boy who wasn't moved much, first began to dance a rather rapid tap-dance and then, to the delight of the audience, stood on his head and waggled his legs in the air. I don't know whether such conduct could have any influence on the plan thought up by the black side, but from that moment onward Romov began for some reason to move just that very pawn, and the flaxen-haired boy began moving briskly across the field, giving the Young Pioneer salute as he did so.

It was getting on for five o'clock when we returned. Who had laid the table, or when, I don't know, but it wasn't Agnia Petrovna; she, wearing her best dress, was receiving visitors with an air as though it were her own services that had been honoured by the award of a high Government decoration. Whoever had laid it, the table was full, and we sat at it until late into the night. Visitors included the Rubakins, Ilya Terentich and his wife and children, Victor, Kolomnin and Malyshev, who was as a rule withdrawn and silent but that day was unusually talkative and gay, so that I decided that this reserved man must be sincerely fond of Andrei.

When the celebration was at its height, in came Belyanin, Andrei's former chief when he was working on the Metro—stout, out of breath, carrying fishing-tackle and a quantity of fish, which he said had been caught in the Moskva River, but which we suspected had really been bought at the food-stores.

...This happened in the midst of our ill success, when one dark day succeeded another and it seemed that it would be necessary, looking truth in the face, to admit defeat. But we went on working.

## THE FUTURE WILL SHOW

We went on working, despite the fact that our preparation (a certain linguist friend of Victor's advised us to call it "crustosin") continued to lose its useful properties under the impact of a number of causes, one of which, time, it was impossible to eliminate. True, we had now succeeded in accumulating it in quantities which, though small, were sufficient for small-scale tests—only on animals, of course. But this did not amount to much, even though nearly half of the Institute building had been transformed into incubators and in each of these stood matrasses, as they call the glass vessels used for rearing microbes. Mortifyingly little!

What were the unknown factors which deprived it of its anti-microbial properties? Had they anything to do with the nutrient medium in which the fungus was reared? For the slightest changes in the composition of the nutrient medium were reflected in its capacity for secreting crustosin. It was sufficient, for instance, for the nutrient medium to be prepared with ordinary tap water instead of with distilled water for the fungus to begin secreting crustosin in a quantity different from before.

Running ahead (only seven months), I'll mention that it was just this idea that pointed out to us the true path to the solution of this problem. Bacteria which destroyed crustosin fell into the nutrient medium out of the air. As they grew they destroyed the yellow substance produced by the mould fungus.

Perhaps, though (this was an idea of Victor's), it would be less sensitive if it could be obtained in dry, powdered form? And with a feeling in which many things were mixed together—persistence and uncertainty, despair and hope—we hurled ourselves along this path, which held out such great hopes.

We were already dreaming of a stable yellow powder, fearing neither time nor light, a small quantity of which would rapidly annihilate the microbes of suppuration. But, as Engels said, "... sound common sense... has most wonderful adventures as soon as it ventures out into the wide world of scientific research." We obtained our preparation in powdered form; but this proved no less sensitive or more stable. After a day or two the crustosin was transformed into useless yellow dust.

And all this—the search for a suitable mould fungus, the complex battle against its hypersensitivity and instability and all its other caprices, of which I haven't mentioned half—all this was only the beginning.

* * *

Never before had the sensation of finding something new in science, which caused us light-headedness, been so closely interwoven with everyday, rough laboratory work. We verified the harmlessness of crustosin by injecting enormous doses into rabbits and mice, and found no particular change in their way of life, behaviour or mood. Then we injected the preparation into each other—all of us, beginning with the head of the lab and ending with the lab assistant. In seven cases out of seven a burning sensation was felt at the point of injection, in three cases an increase of temperature, and in one—Lena Bystrova—fainting.

Three months later, when we had succeeded, though only to a very slight extent, in refining our preparation, we repeated this experiment; in two cases only did the temperature go up, the rest of the "experimental animals" felt fine. Did it follow, then, that the toxicity of the preparation was connected with its insufficient purity?

And then at last came the day when our preparation was to prove that it could annihilate the microbes of suppuration not only in Petri dishes, in test-tubes, or on the laboratory table. We infected two hundred mice with staphylococci and streptococci, so condemning them to inevitable agonizing death. Then we divided them into two equal groups; we injected the first group with our preparation while leaving the second one, the control group, without any treatment.

We were in a position to hope and did hope for good, or at least, not very bad, results. We could and did calculate that out of a hundred mice injected with the preparation, fifty or even sixty would survive. But that ninety-five had survived it was almost impossible to believe. Ninety-five mice cheerfully ran to and fro in their cages, or sniffed, pricked up their ears, preened themselves and washed, sitting on their haunches—in short, behaved just as though they had not been, the day before, mortally, hopelessly ill. The hundred control mice died, every one of them....

"Ought we to publish our findings, Ivan Petrovich?" I asked Kolomnin.

"Let's wait a little. It's beyond belief! The results are too good."

Yes, it was beyond belief! But what an unexplored horizon was revealed behind those dry figures, how many new riddles and hypotheses were born of this truth which we had obtained with such heavy labour!

We had shown, in fact, that crustosin acted not only upon the bacteria of suppuration but also on the diphtheria bacillus and the agents of meningitis, anthrax, gas gangrene, and pneumonia. All these were the mould fungus's enemies, and we could hope that it would deal with them as easily as it dealt with the bacteria of suppuration in living organisms. If this was so, then we had in our hands a means of combating frightful diseases which carried off thousands of human lives every year. Combating gas gangrene, which had baffled the greatest surgeons in the world! Combating meningitis, which forced doctors to watch, gritting their teeth, while children died! If this was so.... But our heads swam when, unable to believe ourselves, we began to think that it really might be so. It was as though we had come out of a dark forest into a bright sunlit clearing where everything around us shone; our eyes blinked as the glossy, green young grass gleamed where it was almost untrodden, and looked darker where somebody had passed before us.

* * *

It was not quite an ordinary day, and this for two reasons which had apparently no connection with each other. At twelve o'clock Lena was called to the telephone; after talking with somebody she came to see me, looking anxious.

"It's my neighbour, Stogin," she said. "He wants me to come; Katenka's worse."

"Worse? I didn't know she was ill. Has she been ill long?"

"For the past week."

"What's the matter with her?"

"Streptococcal tonsillitis. The day before yesterday her temperature went down but today, for some reason, it's gone up again."

"Well, go home then. I'll phone you."

Lena went away and the day followed its normal course. But at four o'clock all at once a deafening crash came from the biochemist's room; I rushed there headlong, then, unable to believe my eyes, froze on the threshold. Grasping each other by the hand, Victor, Katya Dimant and two young colleagues were performing a wild dance around the table, on which stood, in the solitary tripod, a test-tube containing a dark yellow fluid. Kolomnin, who was always so careworn, was stamping his feet, snapping his fingers and humming a tune.

"Tatyana Petrovna, we've got it!" he cried. "There it is—my love!"

The test-tube contained the first refined crustosin. True, it was far from that degree of perfection which could fully exclude any harmful influence when injected into an organism. But this was not so important for us at this time. We had been looking for a method of refining the stuff, and the dark-yellow fluid in the test-tube was the first sign that in our researches we were at last travelling along the right road.

. . . Lena telephoned that evening and said that Katya was feeling bad.

"What is it she's got?"

"The trouble is that I don't know. She hasn't had any patches for some time now, but her temperature is up."

"What does the doctor say?"

"He says we must wait."

And then we talked about something else—about this crustosin of ours. Lena knew of our success already, from Victor, who had called on Rubakin after work.

"Don't worry. Pavlik had a temperature for a long time after his tonsillitis last year."

"I'm not worrying."

But she came to the Institute next morning looking so pale and depressed that there was nobody who didn't ask what had happened.

"She seems to have septicaemia."

"What are you saying? Impossible! How did she get that?"

"Following streptococcal tonsillitis."

"Have they made an analysis of her blood?"

"Yes. The blood's sterile. But the doctor says that doesn't mean anything."

She phoned Katya's father several times during the course of the day and soon the whole lab knew about the little girl who had general blood poisoning, that very blood poisoning which is produced by the microbes of suppuration which had so often languished before our eyes under the action of crustosin.

"If only we had a stable preparation," said Kolomnin with a sigh.

Lena glanced quickly at him, then, opening her eyes wide, at me. I was silent.

That evening I went round to Lena's and found her in Stogin's apartment, in a darkened room, by the bed on which Katenka was lying, breathing heavily, her little hands hanging down helplessly. A tall man in Army uniform strode forward to meet me. He had a pleasant face, with dark brows which met over the bridge of his nose. This was Stogin.

When I was working at the State Farm I had treated cases of septicaemia. But this was the first time that I'd met such a severe case. Towards morning her temperature fell almost to normal but in the evening it rose to 104.9. Her arms were seized by a painful cramp, her head fell back, her teeth chattered. Her pallor was glaring, deathly. And I didn't like it that the old doctor, who arrived as I was leaving, ordered frequent injections of saline solution. Her heart must be working badly.

After a few days her condition became grave, yet what hadn't we done with this pale, thin, exhausted body of hers! . . .

Late in the evening, Kolomnin and I were sitting in the lab when the man on duty phoned and told me that there was an officer to see me. I went down into the vestibule.

"Tatyana Petrovna, it's me, Stogin."

"How's Katenka? Have the doctors conferred?"

"Yes. They've just finished. She's bad. Tatyana Petrovna, I've come to see you. . . . There's no hope any more. You have a preparation which may possibly help. Elena Vasilyevna told me. . . . I know you haven't tried it on patients yet. But, you see, it's all the same now. . . . There's no hope."

He spoke incoherently, hastily, interrupting himself, and obviously very much afraid that I would refuse. His eyes were swollen. His teeth were clenched as though from sudden pain.

"But how can I give you a preparation which has not yet undergone clinical trial?"

"What does it matter? The worst that can happen is that it just won't have any effect; no harm can come of it, can it?"

"I don't think there could be any harm. But. . . ."

"I've nobody in the world but this little girl. You're a woman, you must understand. . . ."

"You must understand, we haven't got this preparation yet. And even if we had it I wouldn't have the right to give it to you."

He was silent. I looked at him, and he quickly screened his eyes with the palm of his hand. His face was distorted with horror at the disaster bearing down on him. . . .

"I'll be back in a moment. Wait a little."

And I went upstairs and told Kolomnin, who was still sitting in the lab, about our conversation, He pondered, narrowed his eyes and gripped his pipe firmly between his teeth.

"Is it true that her condition's hopeless? Phone Elena Vasilyevna."

I phoned.

"What risk is there?" Lena replied, with tears in her voice. "You should see her!"

I replaced the receiver.

"How much crustosin have we?"

"A hundred cubic centimetres: it's not enough."

"Do you think so? What if it is enough?"

"Hardly."

"We don't even know that yet. It's frightful, though."

"Yes, it's frightful."

We were silent. Kolomnin looked at me and stretched out his hand.

"Good luck."

The preparation was injected intramuscularly, five cubic centimetres every three hours. After all, there was nothing to lose, and the harmlessness of crustosin was by then an established fact. At ten next morning I phoned Rubakin; nobody answered, Lena was evidently sitting up with the little girl and Pyotr Nikolayevich had left. Stogin had no phone.

I went to the Institute and plunged into work, but I couldn't get on with it, and phoned again. I took a tram to Crimea Square—a tram which dragged itself along as though deliberately delaying me, and stayed too long at the stops.

. . . All three of them were standing by Katya's bedside—Stogin, Pyotr Nikolayevich, and Lena.

"Well, how is she?"

All three whispered in reply:

"She seems better."

But what a pallid, exhausted face, with sharpened nose and senseless, wandering eyes looked up at me from the high pillow! Her straight hair stuck out, her bluish hands lay helpless on the quilt.

Lena and I went to the Institute and I gave her all the crustosin which had been produced during the past few days.

The night came with the patient's condition unchanged. But towards the end of the second twenty-four hours the telephone rang and Stogin's voice, which I recognized at once by a sort of nervous, ringing timbre which it had, spoke hurriedly to me:

"Tatyana Petrovna, she's better! A lot better!"

"Really?"

"She's come round, she recognized me. Do you think we did wrong by talking a little? Oh Tatyana Petrovna, I... I don't know what to say to you...."

"I couldn't hear anything better from you than what you've just said."

"The doctor's amazed. He says that after a few more days of such treatment she'll be on the road to recovery."

"A few days?"

What could I say to him? We hadn't a single cubic centimetre of crustosin left.

"She may already be needing a little more," said Stogin, speaking again, and the timid, uncertain tone of his voice wrung my heart. "You.... Why don't you speak, Tatyana Petrovna? I talked to Elena Vasilyevna and she, too, was silent for some reason."

"We haven't any more, Comrade Stogin. We can prepare some, but it will take time."

"Much time?"

"Two or three days."

Now it was his turn to be silent for a long time.

"What can we do?"

"Are you speaking from Elena Vasilyevna's?"

"Yes, she's with Katenka."

"Ask her to come to the phone."

But my talking for a good hour with Lena didn't produce any crustosin.

When work was over I went to have a look at the little girl and was amazed to see how much better she was. The shivering had ceased and the pain was gone. Her temperature hardly rose as evening came on, for the first time since the beginning of her illness. As before, her pinched little face was deathly pale, but a feeble glimmer of life shone in her eyes when Lena kissed her little hand.

Did this mean that we were right? Oh, if only we could continue the injections! Perhaps, if we could, we might gain a double victory, because not only would we save Katenka Stogina, we would also show that with crustosin's aid we could save not one but thousands of lives.

But there was no crustosin available and no force existed capable of forcing the mould fungus to hasten its work. There was no crustosin; and Katenka got worse and Stogin telephoned and called and sat in the hallway, hanging his head, and following with a lingering look everybody who went in or out. He took from the lab some of the broth (the medium in which the fungus grew). The little girl drank it. Naturally, it brought her, and could bring her, no relief.

Time, the enemy with which we could not cope, went on working against us. On any bench in our lab you could find a test-tube containing old crustosin which had lost its activity. And in the incubator mould fungus was growing, from which we would be able to produce fresh quantities of the preparation.

Lena and I went to see Professor Vishnyakov, one of the best physicians in the Soviet Union, and brought him to the bedside of the patient, or rather, of the dying girl. The professor listened to her heart and examined her blood-tests and her temperature chart.

"Do you, Tatyana Petrovna, think that an improvement occurred after she had injections of your preparation?"

"Yes. But we've none left. We need time to prepare it."

The big man with the clever, tired eyes listened attentively, raising his thick, old man's eyebrows.

"If we had only another two or three days, perhaps we might save her."

He gave a faint smile and shrugged his shoulders sadly.

"Would that it were possible. But anyway, let's do all we can."

I scarcely left the lab after that, and I don't know how he waged his fight against advancing death or what means he used to win us those few days. But the struggle went on, unbroken, tireless, acute.

It seemed that we, too, did all we could in those days which flew by so frantically. Matrasses containing nutrient medium with green mould growing on it were arranged in long rows in all the incubators. Everywhere you looked those vessels were standing, and we were sure that in each of them was concealed a particle of the life which we wanted to give back to Katya Stogina, to give back to her at any cost.

By the end of the third day we'd managed to get the preparation and Vishnyakov's assistants began to inject it, intravenously this time, in doses of five cubic centimetres every three hours.

... Everything was confused, days and nights alike. Everything came together and was mixed up—work, various business matters, reports, holidays, all the things that only a week previously, it seemed, could exist at the same time as and yet independently of Katya's illness. Everything now was linked with the bedside of that wan little girl who was lying with her head resting on a high pillow and firmly tied up with a towel.

She was still the same. There was a little hope. There was no hope. She seemed to find it less hard to breathe. There was hope again.

Vishnyakov's clever face wore an intent look from his hours of studying this new "resurrection from the dead." We, too, observed it intently. Hour after hour, night and day. Had the picture of the illness changed, and if so how? Was there any hope at all? Yes, perhaps there was. A doctor's cautious reservations.

And yet the little girl's condition became easier. Her temperature fell. Her acute pallor passed. The three days which I'd asked the famous physician to give us were long past, but Katya lived. . . .

"Will she live?" I asked Vishnyakov late one evening as he left the house on Crimea Square. Lena and I accompanied him, and he walked between us, thoughtful and preoccupied, leaning heavily on his stick.

"For the present I can only say this: I've been observing this grave illness for forty years now, and for the first time I've not been able to recognize it. You've performed a miracle. But one swallow doesn't make a summer. The future will show."

* * *

Yes, the future would show. We had hardly slept the previous night but for some reason I didn't want to sleep now. It was a clear, bright evening, with many people strolling about the streets. Moscow was attractive, spring-like, youthful.

"Do you sometimes have a feeling, Tanechka, that one period of life is ending and another beginning?"

"Yes, I do, and I always want to have a peep at the new period, to see what it will be like."

We walked along Kropotkin Street and along the boulevards. Each branch of the fresh young shrubbery was distinctly visible under the lights and was repeated in the fine tracery of shadow on the ground.

"I had a moment like that today . . . when I looked into Katya's eyes and knew that she would live. And that we had done it."

"And do you remember that evening after we graduated, when we all met at the flat of that friend of mine—not an Institute friend, a Lopakhin friend? At Nina's. That was when we tried to look into the future. It seemed in those days something hidden, complex, extraordinary. You said then, 'You know, it's a strange thing, girls, but apparently life can become even more interesting.' "

"And it has become more interesting."

We turned down a sidestreet. It was darker there than on the boulevard, but we could see the stars.

"Do you know what her eyes looked like? Like the eyes of very young children, when they first begin consciously to see. . . . Do you agree, now, Tanya, the time's come to publish our findings?"

"Yes, another two or three months' work and. . . . Oh, how I hate writing. But what can we do, we'll have to."

This was in May, 1941.

## V. A. KAVERIN

Veniamin Alexandrovich Kaverin was born in Pskov in 1902. His father was the conductor of an orchestra.

As a schoolboy he was interested in the history of Russian literature and tried his hand at writing poetry. In 1923, he graduated from the Leningrad Institute of Eastern Languages and a year later —from Leningrad University. In 1929, he read a thesis on problems from the history of Russian journalism.

Kaverin's first books were collections of adventure stories.

"My literary career started very happily," Kaverin says. "I corresponded with Maxim Gorky, who was very attentive to my work and was always there to advise me on everything I was interested in in those days. Yuri Tynyanov, who is well known for his historical novels, was my mentor and a warm-hearted though exacting critic of my work. I began writing at the same time as Konstantin Fedin, Vsevolod Ivanov and Nikolai Tikhonov, who did much to shape our young, Soviet literature."

Kaverin wrote his first novel, *Brawler or Evenings on Vasilyev Island*, in 1928. In his next novel, *Fulfilment of Desire* (1934), he describes the life of the Soviet intelligentsia. This was the first book in which Kaverin gave a portrayal of modern youth, a theme which subsequently was dealt with in other works.

*Two Captains*, a novel about a young man of our day, was put out in instalments, beginning with 1938. It traces his life from boyhood to his prime, which coincides with the outbreak of World War II. The novel was finished in 1944 and won a Stalin Prize.

During the war, Kaverin was a war correspondent for *Izvestia* and published several volumes of stories: *We Have Become Different*, *An Eagle Flies*, *A Russian Boy*, and others.

*Open Book*, a novel about a woman microbiologist, who narrates her story herself, was published in 1949.

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